Partisan Review

1

1974-$2.00-85p.

STEVEN MARCUS — Freud's Dora

RICHARD GILMAN — Beckett

MORRIS DICKSTEIN — The Fifties

GILBERT SORRENTINO — Anonymous Sketch of the Writer

ROBERT BOYERS — The Laingians

DIANA TRILLING — On Portrait of a Marriage

VICTOR NAVASKY — The Foundations

and

Jonathan Baumbach, Max Byrd, Lewis Coser, Anne Fabre-Luce, Raymond Federman, Alan Helms, Paul Zweig

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

THE ELECTED CIRCLE
Studies in the Art of Prose
LAURENCE STAPLETON
"An extraordinary book which is clearly the fruit of long meditation, and of *delight*. But it is the prose in which it is written that tells me the most—it is imaginative prose, of its own origin and adventure. *The Elected Circle* also reflects—and gives directly to the reader an excitement of the mind."—Eudora Welty $11.00

LUCIFER IN HARNESS
American Meter, Metaphor, and Diction
EDWIN FUSSELL
Writing in a provocative critical style attuned to the poets he discusses, Edwin Fussell explores the dilemma of the American poet who finds himself reluctantly harnessed to the English language and to English literary tradition. The emphasis is on those poets who have successfully created a truly American poetry—Poe, Whitman, Pound, Eliot, and Williams—but the author also discusses Hart Crane, Wallace Stevens, and others. $9.50

THE POETRY OF RIMBAUD
ROBERT GREER COHN
In this interpretive analysis of the poetry of Rimbaud, Robert Greer Cohn introduces the reader to the work of Rimbaud and outlines the poet's meteoric career. He brings the various aspects of the poetry into a coherent view which avoids a tendentious or reductive approach, and he provides analyses of key passages of the poems, with detailed clarifications of difficult lines and even words. $18.50

SHAKESPEARE'S MATURE TRAGEDIES
BERNARD McELROY
The collapse of the tragic hero's world and his struggle to reconstruct it —contrasted against the highly distinct, self-contained version of reality within the world of the play—is the basis for Bernard McElroy's wise and humane discussion of *Hamlet, Othello, King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. "One of the best general studies of Shakespearean tragedy I have ever read."—Jonas A. Barish $10.00

SHAKESPEARE'S LIVING ART
ROSALIE L. COLIE
In this, her last book, Rosalie L. Colie suggests that by linking "forms" —verse forms, devices, motives, themes, conventions, genres—to the culture from which a writer springs and to his selection and organization of materials, we can understand the processes by which he becomes what he is, and is enabled to do what he does. Particularly concerned with uncovering the ways in which Shakespeare used, misused, criticized, recreated, and sometimes revolutionized the received topics and devices of his craft, the author has chosen for study topics which connect Shakespeare with the long and rich continental Renaissance, in the hope that in the future Shakespeare might be, like Dante and Cervantes, an essential author in a comparatist's education.
Cloth, $18.50; Limited paperback, $9.75

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BACK TO BECKETT

RUBY COHN

Although a leading Beckett scholar, in this book Ruby Cohn leans lightly on objective scholarship in an attempt to get back to Beckett, to the basic being in the works themselves. She draws on her personal response to his works, on the inherent human interest of his biography, on her discussions with him, and on her own fascination with the theater in general and Beckett in particular. All his output, published and unpublished, is examined to show how Beckett investigates the anatomy of a particular genre and uses it to delineate the human situation $12.50

TELL ME AFRICA

An Approach to African Literature

JAMES OLNEY

Since the African artist's commitment to individualism is sharply qualified by the traditional African view of social reality, African autobiography is considered less an individual phenomenon than a social one. James Olney demonstrates that autobiography, because it provides the most direct narrative enactments of the ways, motives, and beliefs of a culture, is an excellent way to approach African literature. Thus, after a general discussion of the African ethos, each chapter takes up the "autobiographical" literature of a specific group in African society and treats it as both an expression of a personal vision and as a revelation of a permeating social reality.

Cloth, $15.00; paper, $3.45

THE CONCEPT OF NEGRITUDE IN THE POETRY OF LÉOPOLD SÉDAR SENGHOR

SYLVIA WASHINGTON BÂ

Negritude has been defined by Léopold Sédar Senghor as "the sum of the cultural values of the black world as they are expressed in the life, the institutions, and the works of black men." Sylvia Washington Bâ analyzes Senghor's poetry to show how the concept of negritude infuses it at every level. The author has translated a large selection of Senghor's poems from the French, and a long poem on Martin Luther King is published here for the first time. $11.00

ESSAYS ON EUROPEAN LITERATURE

Kritische Essays zur europäischen Literature

E. R. CURTIUS

translated by MICHAEL KOWAL

These 24 essays, written over a period of nearly 30 years, range widely in time and scope and consider some of the greatest figures in European literature, among them Virgil, Goethe, Balzac, Joyce, Eliot, Ortega y Gasset, and Hesse. Available together for the first time in English, these essays show the qualities that made Curtius one of the great critics of our age: his lucid, penetrating mind, his comprehensive erudition, his cosmopolitan outlook, and above all his passionate concern for European culture.

Cloth, $20.00; Limited paperback, $9.75

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS Princeton, New Jersey 08540

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the human context

Editor Responsible:

Paul A. Senft, 17 Platt's Lane, London, NW3 7NP, U.K.

'the human context' explores the philosophical assumptions and the methodology of the human sciences (the different fields of psychology, sociology and anthropology). It aims at a critical dialogue between different orientations in philosophy itself and at a confrontation with science. The total yearly volume of the periodical is in excess of 600 pages and is published in three issues annually, with original contributions in full translation from and into English, French, German, Spanish and Italian.

VOLUME VI, NO. 1, 1974

Articles

GERARD RADNITZKY: On the Crucial Role of Preconceptions about the Subject Matter in Scientific Research

ANTHONY DE REUCK: Controlled Communication: Rationale and Dynamics

MITCHELL GINSBERG: Action and Communication

J. P. COULTER: The Ethnomethodological Programme in Contemporary Sociology

G. BENEDETTI: The Irrational in the Psychotherapy of Psychosis

ROBERT D. ROMANYSHYN: Psychotherapy: A Dialogue of Faith and Power

JOSEPH F. RYCHLAK: The Misplaced Dialectic in the Dialogue of Faith and Power

MICHAEL G. PICARDIE: A Metaphysical Order in Psychiatric Work

ALEX COMFORT: On Sexuality, Play and Earnest

MIGUEL PRADOS: Vincent Van Gogh's Childhood and Boyhood: A Psychological Enquiry

Documents and Reports, Book Reviews, Books Received

Subscription per volume (3 issues) £6.50 (US $19.50)
Single issues and back numbers £2.25 (US $6.75)

Subscriptions and advertising enquiries should be sent to

BASIL BLACKWELL & MOTT LTD. (JOURNALS DEPT.)
108 COWLEY ROAD,
OXFORD OX4 1JF, U.K.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From "breeches roles" to impresario

MADAME VESTRIS AND THE LONDON STAGE

William W. Appleton. From the days of the Regency to the Victorian age Madame Vestris was a favorite of London audiences, equally at home in opera, spectaculars, and legitimate comedy. But more importantly, she brought lasting reforms to the English theatre—as director of the Olympic, the Lyceum, and Covent Garden. Against the colorful background of 19th-century London, Professor Appleton portrays this extraordinary woman from her turbulent early years to her tragic end. Illustrated. $9.95

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
New York, New York 10025

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Partisan Review

EDITORIAL BOARD
William Phillips
EDITOR

Steven Marcus
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

•

MANAGING EDITOR
Rhoda M. Ribner

ASSISTANT TO THE EDITORS
Selma Klahr Rudnick

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE
Joan C. Schwartz

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS
Kathleen Agena
Sallie Iovenko
Mary Kaplan
Stephen Miller

STAFF ASSISTANTS
Eva Barczay
Sara Oswald
Jonna G. Semeiks

•

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Peter Brooks
Morris Dickstein
Richard Gilman
Caroline Rand Herron

CONSULTANTS
Norman Birnbaum
Frank Kermode
Christopher Lasch
Richard Poirier
Susan Sontag
Stephen Spender

PUBLICATIONS AND ADVISORY BOARD
Louis G. Cowan
Mason Gross
CO-CHAIRMEN

Joanna S. Rose
SECRETARY

Edward E. Booher
Carter Burden
Joan Ganz Cooney
H. William Fitelson
Allen Grover
Marjorie Iseman
Vera List
James Marshall
Eugene Meyer
Robert H. Montgomery, Jr.
George L. K. Morris
Richard Schlatter
Roger L. Stevens
Harold M. Wit

PARTISAN REVIEW is at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. It is published quarterly by Partisan Review, Inc. Subscriptions: $7.50 a year, $14.50 for two years; foreign subscriptions, including Canada: $8.00 a year, $15.50 for two years. All payments from foreign countries must be made by U.S. money orders or checks payable in U.S. currency with $.60 added for collection charges. Single copy: $2.00. No manuscripts will be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury. Copyright © 1974 by P.R., Inc. Second class postage paid at New York., N.Y. and additional entries.

PARTISAN REVIEW, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PR1 1974-VOLUME XLI-NUMBER 1

CONTENTS

NOTES 8

ARTICLES
Freud and Dora Steven Marcus 12
Cold War Blues Morris Dickstein 30
Beckett Richard Gilman 56
Paris Letter Anne Fabre-Luce 77
The Laingian Family Robert Boyers 109

STORIES
Anonymous Sketch of the Writer Gilbert Sorrentino 24

POEMS
The Archeology Paul Zweig 54

GOING TO THE MOVIES
The House that Losey Built Jonathan Baumbach 82

BOOKS
Portrait of a Marriage by Nigel Nicolson
From Time to Time by Hannah Tillich
Diana Trilling 120
The Coming of Post-Industrial Society by Daniel Bell
Lewis A. Coser 128
The Country and the City by Raymond Williams
Cities of Light and Sons of the Morning by Martin Green
Max Byrd 132
Out by Ronald Sukenick
Raymond Federman 137
The Big Foundations by Waldemar A. Nielsen
Victor S. Navasky 143
They Feed They Lion by Philip Levine
An Ear in Bartram's Tree by Jonathan Williams
Riverbed by David Wagoner
Alan Helms 151

LETTERS 158

COVER DESIGN: CHARLES E. FINSILVER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"THE BIG SEND-OFF"

. . . is the heading *New York* magazine gave its Best Bets column on this unique series of postcards showing details of New York City's landmark buildings. Seven jumbo cards in superb color, three in velvety black-and-white gravure, faithfully reproduce original photographs by Mark Feldstein. The subjects include the lantern at the Players Club, a terra cotta panel on New York's only Louis Sullivan building, an angel overlooking City Hall from 150 Nassau Street, and a sampling of elegant stone and cast iron ornament that generally goes unobserved.

Use the cards for invitations, greeting cards, any correspondence you want to be remembered. Many people frame them. Packet of 20 cards (two each of ten subjects) only $3.

Cranford Wood, Inc.
310 East 75 St., NYC 10021

I enclose $_____ for _____ packs of postcards at $3 per pack (including tax, postage, and handling).

_____
name

_____
address

_____
city, state & zip

NOTES

"Anonymous Sketch of the Writer" is a section of an as yet unfinished novel by **GILBERT SORRENTINO**, who is a Guggenheim fellow for 1973–74. . . . **PAUL ZWEIG's** "The Archeology" will appear in **The Dark Side of the Earth**, from Harper & Row this April. Then he is off for a trip in the Sahara. . . . **ANNE FABRE-LUCE** teaches at the University of Paris-Nanterre. She is a contributor to **Quinzaine Literaire**. . . . **Reruns** is **JONATHAN BAUMBACH's** new novel, to be published by the Fiction Collective. . . . **ROBERT BOYERS** teaches at Skidmore where he is editor of **Salmagundi**. He has put together a collection of papers on **R. D. Laing and Anti-Psychiatry**. . . . **DIANA TRILLING** is recently returned from a second year of residence in Oxford. . . . **LEWIS COSER'S Greedy Institutions** is new from The Free Press. He is incoming president of the American Sociological Association. . . . **MAX BYRD** teaches at Yale and lives in the country. His **Visits to Bedlam: Madness and Literature in the Eighteenth Century** will be published in May by the University of South Carolina Press. . . . **RAYMOND FEDERMAN** is now finishing his third novel **Take It or Leave It**. . . . Visiting Professor of Government at Wesleyan University this spring, **VICTOR NAVASKY** is working on a book about what happens when government puts pressure on people to betray their principles. . . . **ALAN HELMS** is studying Chinese, the better to read Li Po. He teaches at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POINTS AFTER

THE END OF IDEOLOGY

It's sad to see the New Left go out on a sour note. Its accomplishments are obscured by zealots like Daniel Berrigan, whose latest blast at Israel —– in which one can hear the echoes of the New Left —– leads one to question everything he has said and done. In a moving piece in the *Voice* recently, Paul Cowan points out some of the foolishness and ignorance behind Berrigan's pro-Arab remarks, but attributes them mostly to his naivety and his overdeveloped sense of justice. I'm afraid however that it was not so much Berrigan's high-mindedness as his ideology that showed through his bad-tempered anti-Israeli —– and anti-Jewish —– charges. And it is even clearer now than it was in the sixties that Berrigan's ideology —– like that of much of the New Left —– which was actually a watered down version of old Marxist and Communist notions, was responsible for the dedication as well as the narrowness of his politics. Of course, the final irony, which hardly needs pointing up now, is that the movement that spawned freewheeling doctrinaires like Berrigan began as a loose, populist, anti-ideological, youthful, almost anarchist variety of idealism without ideology. Obviously, its particular brand of anti-ideology left it open to all the traditional ideologies on the left.

FOOTNOTE TO THE FIFTIES

It is in the nature of history, of course, to be rewritten by each generation. But it is disturbing to think that what makes our sense of the past contemporary at the same time distorts it.

For example, Morris Dickstein's strong piece on the fifties in this issue, with much of which I agree, has a view of the Cold War and of the anti-Communist spirit of the time that does not jibe with my own experience. For one thing, I do not feel that the many complex literary currents of the period can be explained by the Cold War atmosphere which Dickstein believes dominated the fifties. Nor do I think the Cold War was the American invention that revisionist history made it out to be; and if it was an expression of the international conflict and not a self-generating "Cold War mentality," then it alone could not be responsible for the disruption of American culture. For the record, I should also say that the overwrought anti-Communism Dickstein talks about was not the whole show, and Dickstein's discussión of the Rosenberg case also seems to me out of focus. Most of us were anti-Communist, and properly so, but this was only one element in our left or liberal perspective. We were anti-Communists of the left. As for the Rosenbergs, many people like myself thought they were guilty, but we were not gleeful or bloodthirsty. The truth is that, unlike some of the New Left —– and the Communists, of course —– we did not consider espionage a concern of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the left. It was a legal question, not a political one, and certainly not a cause.

In fact, the confusion of these problems came from an identification of Russian national interests with socialist ideals, and this confusion has been one of the main reasons why American radical politics has oscillated between a doctrinaire orthodoxy and a mindless populism, between the futility of sectarianism and the impotence of respectability. The very distinction between Communists and anti-Communists is itself a trap and not a solution, and to perpetuate this polarization is to suggest that no other position is possible —– which, unfortunately, may be the case.

W. P.

THE FREEZE

The official campaigns now being conducted in Hungary and Yugoslavia against critical socialist thinkers remind us (if a reminder is needed) that the repressive potential of one-party regimes remains very large. And, ironically, the Hungarian and Yugoslav regimes have used a period of *détente* to narrow the limits of freedom. But both governments must know that authentic and lasting *détente* with the West depends not only on good relations with Messrs. Nixon and Kissinger, but on public opinion.

In Hungary, an ideological attack on a group of scholars associated with the late Gyorgy Lukacs was followed by administrative measures which deprived them of their academic posts and of the right to travel or to publish. The group includes Gyorgy Bence, Andras Hegedus, Agnes Heller, Janos Kis, Gyorgy Markus, Maria Markus, Mihaly Vajda, though Hegedus and Heller, because of their prominence, were singled out for special attention. Hegedus, prime minister at the outbreak of the 1956 revolution, withdrew from active politics, rethought his position, and subsequently made his international reputation as a critic of bureaucratic socialism. Agnes Heller, who has tried to construct a philosophical foundation for a libertarian socialism, has been published in France, England, and Germany. The persecution of this group suggests that the Hungarian regime will never tolerate thinkers who transcend the (changing) limits prescribed by the party. The irony is that the Hungarian regime is nullifying Hungary's contribution to Marxism.

The Yugoslav case is more surprising —– particularly since President Tito condemned the Stalinist counterrevolution in Hungary in 1956. Until recently Yugoslavia was held to be the exemplary society: Marxist socialism and a considerable measure of freedom appeared compatible. But possibly this impression rested on an illusion, which might indicate that the Yugoslav road to socialism could, like so many others, lead to neo-Stalinism.

In any event, in recent months the campaign of state and party officials against the internationally known Praxis group of philosophers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and sociologists has intensified. At the University of Belgrade, an initial effort to dismiss eight professors failed when the party organization in the Department of Philosophy and Sociology refused to assent to the purge. It is now proposed to undermine university autonomy (greater in Yugoslavia than in other Communist countries) by replacing half the members of the Faculty Council, hitherto elected, with state nominees. And — according to the new university law — not only scholarly but also "moral and political criteria" are to be applied to professors. In the meantime, Svetosar Stojanovic, well known in this country (and elsewhere) as the author of *Between Ideals and Reality, A Critique of Socialism and Its Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), has had his freedom restricted, and has been unable to attend an international philosophical congress in Bulgaria or to accept an invitation to teach at Berkeley this spring.

We ask the Yugoslav Federal Government and the League of Communists, as well as state and party organizations in the Croatian and Serbian republics, to consider the grave damage done to Yugoslavia's international position by these repeated attempts to infringe upon the freedoms without which socialism is impossible.

The Editors

PHILIP RAHV

Philip Rahv, who died in Cambridge, Mass. on December 23 of last year, was with William Phillips a founder of *Partisan Review*, and remained an editor until 1969, when he left, bringing out his own magazine the next year. Other writers have served as editors at various times, though in the earlier years it was mainly under Phillips's and Rahv's direction that PR was able to survive the ordinary vicissitudes of a serious journal of art and opinion, as well as the special pressures on intellectuals in that period. One of the distinctions of the magazine was its combination of literary and political sensibility, which Rahv's particular talents did much to create. But in time a number of editorial and personal differences arose between Rahv and other members of the magazine, as a result of which he became less and less active, and to conceal such differences would simply falsify the history of PR. We prefer to stress, however, his editorial contributions as well as his own accomplishments not only as a critic but as an intellectual and political force.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Steven Marcus

FREUD AND DORA:
Story, History, Case History

I.

It is generally agreed that Freud's case histories are unique. Today more than half a century after they were written they are still widely read. Even more, they are still widely used for instruction and training in psychoanalytic institutes. One of the inferences that such a vigorous condition of survival prompts is that these writings have not yet been superseded. Like other masterpieces of literature or the arts, these works seem to possess certain transhistorical qualities —— although it may by no means be easy to specify what those qualities are. The implacable "march of science" has not —— or has not yet —— consigned them to "mere" history. Their singular and mysterious complexity, density, and richness have thus far prevented such a transformation and demotion.

This state of affairs has received less attention than it merits. Freud's case histories —— and his works in general —— are unique as pieces or kinds of writing, and it may be useful to examine one of Freud's case histories from the point of view of literary criticism, to analyze it as a piece of writing, and to determine whether this method of proceeding may yield results that other means have not. My assumption —— and conclusion —— is that Freud is a great writer and that one of his major case histories is a great work of literature —— that is to say it is both an outstanding creative and imaginative performance and an intellectual and cognitive achievement of the highest order. And yet this triumphant greatness is in part connected with the circumstance that it is about a kind of

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a shortened version of a piece that will soon appear full-length in a collection of essays by Steven Marcus.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

failure, and that part of the failure remains in fact unacknowledged and unconscious.

"Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," better known as the case of Dora, is Freud's first great case history —— oddly enough he was to write only four others. It may be helpful for the reader if at the outset I refresh his memory by briefly reviewing some of the external facts of the case. In the autumn of 1900, Dora, an eighteen-year-old young woman, began treatment with Freud. She did so reluctantly and against her will, and, Freud writes, "it was only her father's authority which induced her to come to me at all." Neither Dora nor her father were strangers to Freud. He had made separate acquaintance with both of them in the past, during certain episodes of illness that characterized their lives if not the life of the family as a whole. (Freud knew other members of the family as well.)

As for Dora herself, her afflictions, both mental and physical, had begun in early childhood and had persisted and flourished with variations and fluctuating intensities until she was presented to Freud for therapy. Among the symptoms from which she suffered were to be found dyspnea, migraine, and periodic attacks of nervous coughing often accompanied by complete loss of voice during part of the episode. Dora had in fact first been brought by her father to Freud two years earlier, when she was sixteen and suffering from a cough and hoarseness; he had then "proposed giving her psychological treatment," but this suggestion was not adopted since "the attack in question, like the others, passed off spontaneously." In the course of his treatment of Dora, Freud also learned of further hysterical —— or hysterically connected —— productions on her part, such as a feverish attack that mimicked appendicitis, a periodic limp, and a vaginal catarrh or discharge. Moreover, during the two-year interval between Dora's first visit and the occasion on which her father brought her to Freud a second time, and "handed her over to me for psychotherapeutic treatment . . . Dora had grown unmistakably neurotic." Dora was now "in the first bloom of youth —— a girl of intelligent and engaging looks." Her character had, however, undergone an alteration. She had become chronically depressed, and was generally dissatisfied with both herself and her family. She had become

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unfriendly toward the father whom she had hitherto loved, idealized, and identified with. Sh was "on very bad terms" with her mother, for whom she felt a good deal of scorn. "She tried to avoid social intercourse, and employed herself —— so far as she was allowed to by the fatigue and lack of concentration of which she complained —— with attending lectures for women and with carrying on more or less serious studies." Two further events precipitated the crisis which led to her being delivered to Freud. Her parents found a written note in which she declared her intention to commit suicide because "as she said, she could no longer endure her life." Following this there occurred one day "a slight passage of words" between Dora and her father, which ended with Dora suddenly losing consciousness —— the attack, Freud believed, was "accompanied by convulsions and delirious states," although it was lost to amnesia and never came up in the analysis.

Having outlined this array of affections, Freud dryly remarks that such a case "does not upon the whole seem worth recording. It is merely a case of *'petite hystérie'* with the commonest of all somatic and mental symptoms. . . . More interesting cases of hysteria have no doubt been published."

This disavowal of anything sensational to come is of course a bit of shrewd disingenuousness on Freud's part, for what follows at once is his assertion that he is going to elucidate the meaning, origin, and function of every one of these symptoms by means of the events and experiences of Dora's life. He is going in other words to discover the "psychological determinants" that will account for Dora's illnesses; among these determinants he lists three principal conditions: "a psychical trauma, a conflict of affects, and . . . a disturbance in the sphere of sexuality." And so Freud begins the treatment by asking Dora to talk about her experiences. What emerges is the substance of the case history, a substance which takes all of Freud's immense analytic, expository, and narrative talents to bring into order. I will again very roughly and briefly summarize some of this material.

Sometime after 1888, when the family had moved to B____ the health resort where the father's tuberculosis had sent them —— an intimate and enduring friendship sprang up between

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them and a couple named K. Dora's father was deeply unhappy in his marriage and apparently made no bones about it. The K.'s too were unhappily married, as it later turned out. Frau K. took to nursing Dora's father during these years of his illness. She also befriended Dora, and they behaved toward one another in the most familiar way and talked together about the most intimate subjects. Herr K., her husband, also made himself a close friend of Dora's —— going regularly for walks with her and giving her presents. Dora in her turn befriended the K.'s two small children, "and had been almost a mother to them." What begins to be slowly if unmistakably disclosed is that Dora's father and Frau K. had established a sexual liaison and that this relation had by the time of Dora's entering into treatment endured for many years. At the same time Dora's father and Frau K. had tacitly connived at turning Dora over to Herr K., just as years later her father "handed her over to me [Freud] for psychotherapeutic treatment." In some sense everyone was conspiring to conceal what was going on; and in some yet further sense everyone was conspiring to deny that anything was going on at all. What we have here, on one of its sides, is a classical Victorian domestic drama, that is at the same time a sexual and emotional can of worms.

Matters were brought to a crisis by two events that occurred to Dora at two different periods of her adolescence. When she was fourteen, Herr K. contrived one day to be alone with her in his place of business; in a state of sexual excitement, he "suddenly clasped the girl to him and pressed a kiss on her lips." Dora responded with a "violent feeling of disgust," and hurried away. This experience, like those referred to in the foregoing paragraph, was never discussed with or mentioned to anyone, and relations continued as before. The second scene took place two years later in the summer when Dora was sixteen (it was just after she had seen Freud for the first time). She and Herr K. were taking a walk by a lake in the Alps. In Dora's words, as they come filtered to us through Freud, Herr K. "had the audacity to make her a proposal." Apparently he had begun to declare his love for this girl whom he had known so well for so long. "No sooner had she grasped Herr K.'s intention than, without letting him finish what he had to say, she had given him a slap in the face and hurried

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

away." The episode as a whole leads Freud quite plausibly to ask: "If Dora loved Herr K., what was the reason for her refusing him in the scene by the lake? Or at any rate, why did her refusal take such a brutal form, as though she were embittered against him? And how could a girl who was in love feel insulted by a proposal which was made in a manner neither tactless nor offensive?" It may occur to us to wonder whether in the extended context of this case that slap in the face was a "brutal form" of refusal; but as for the other questions posed by Freud they are without question rhetorical in character.

On this second occasion Dora did not remain silent. Her father was preparing to depart from the Alpine lake, and she declared her determination to leave at once with him. Two weeks later she told the story of the scene by the lake to her mother, who relayed it —— as Dora had clearly intended —— to her father. In due course Herr K. was "called to account" on this score, but he "denied in the most emphatic terms having on his side made any advances" and suggested that she "had merely fancied the whole scene she had described." Dora's father "believed" the story concocted by Herr —— and Frau —— K., and it is from this moment, more than two years before she came to Freud for treatment, that the change in Dora's character can be dated. Her love for the K.'s turned into hatred, and she became obsessed with the idea of getting her father to break off relations with them. She saw through the rationalizations and denials of her father and Frau K., and had "no doubt that what bound her father to this young and beautiful woman was a common love-affair." Nothing that could help to confirm this view had escaped her perception, which in this connection was pitilessly sharp. . . ." Indeed, "the sharp-sighted Dora" was an excellent detective when it came to uncovering her father's clandestine sexual activities, and her withering criticisms of her father's character —— that he was "insincere . . . had a strain of baseness in his character . . . only thought of his own enjoyment . . . had a gift for seeing things in the light which suited him best" —— were in general concurred in by Freud. Freud also agreed with Dora that there was something in her embittered if exaggerated contention that "she had been handed over to Herr K. as the price of his tolerating the relations

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between her father and his wife." Nevertheless, the cause of her greatest embitterment seems to have been her father's "readiness to consider the scene by the lake as a product of her imagination." And although Freud was in his customary way skeptical about such impassioned protestations and repudiations —— and surmised that something in the way of an opposite series of thoughts or self-reproaches lay behind them —— he was forced to come to "the conclusion that Dora's story must correspond to the facts in every respect." If we try to put ourselves in the place of this girl between her sixteenth and eighteenth years, we can at once recognize that her situation was a desperate one. The three adults to whom she was closest, whom she loved the most in the world, were apparently conspiring —— separately, in tandem, or in concert —— to deny her the reality of her experience. They were conspiring to deny Dora her reality and reality itself. This betrayal touched upon matters that might easily unhinge the mind of a young person; for the three adults were not betraying Dora's love and trust alone; they were betraying the structure of the actual world. And indeed when Dora's father handed her over to Freud with the parting injunction "Please try and bring her to reason," there were no two ways of taking what he meant. Naturally he had no idea of the mind and character of the physician to whom he had dealt this leading remark.

II.

Dora began treatment with Freud some time in October 1900. Freud wrote to Fliess that "the case has opened smoothly to my collection of picklocks," but the analysis was not proceeding well. The material produced was very rich, but Dora was there more or less against her will. Moreover, she was more than usually amnesic about events in her remote past and about her inner and mental life. The analysis found its focus and climax in two dreams. The first of these was the production by Dora of a dream that in the past she had dreamed recurrently. Among the many messages concealed by it, Freud made out one that he conveyed to his patient: " 'You have decided to give up the treatment,' " he told her, adding, " 'to which, after all, it is only your father who makes you come.' " It was a self-fulfilling inter-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pretation. A few weeks after the first dream, the second dream occurred. Freud spent two hours elucidating it, and at the beginning of the third, which took place on December 31, 1900, Dora informed him that she was there for the last time. Freud pressed on during this hour and presented Dora with a series of stunning and outrageously intelligent interpretations. The analysis ended as follows: "Dora had listened to me without any of her usual contradictions. She seemed to be moved; she said good-bye to me very warmly, with the heartiest wishes for the New Year, and came no more." Dora's father subsequently called on Freud two or three times to reassure him that Dora was returning, but Freud knew better than to take him at his word. Fifteen months later, in April 1902, Dora returned for a single visit; what she had to tell Freud on that occasion was of some interest, but he knew that she was done with him, as indeed she was.

Dora was actuated by many impulses in breaking off the treatment; prominent among these partial motives was revenge —— upon men in general and at that moment Freud in particular, who was standing for those other men in her life who had betrayed and injured her. He writes rather ruefully of Dora's "breaking off so unexpectedly, just when my hopes of a successful termination of the treatment were at their highest, and her thus bringing those hopes to nothing —— this was an unmistakable act of vengeance on her part." And although Dora's "purpose of self-injury" was also served by this action, Freud goes on clearly to imply that he felt hurt and wounded by her behavior. Yet it could not have been so unexpected as all that, since as early as the first dream, Freud both understood and had communicated this understanding to Dora that she had already decided to give up the treatment. What is suggested by this logical hiatus is that although Dora had done with Freud, Freud had not done with Dora. And this supposition is supported by what immediately followed. As soon as Dora left him, Freud began writing up her case history —— a proceeding that, as far as I have been able to ascertain, was not in point of immediacy a usual response for him. He interrupted the composition of the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* on which he was then engaged and wrote what is substantially the case of Dora during the first three weeks of January 1901. On January 25, he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wrote to Fliess that he had finished the work the day before and added, with that terrifying self-confidence of judgment that he frequently revealed, "Anyhow, it is the most subtle thing I have yet written and will produce an even more horrifying effect than usual." The title he had at first given the new work —— "Dreams and Hysteria" —— suggests the magnitude of ambition that was at play in him. At the same time, however, Freud's settling of his account with Dora took on the proportions of a heroic inner and intellectual enterprise.

Yet that account was still by no means settled, as the obscure subsequent history of this work dramatically demonstrates. In the first letter of January 25, 1901, Freud had written to Fliess that the paper had already been accepted by Ziehen, joint editor of the *Monatsschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie.* On the fifteenth of February, in another letter to Fliess, he remarks that he is now finishing up *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* and that when he has done so, he will correct it and the case history. About two months later, in March 1901, according to Ernest Jones, Freud showed "his notes of the case" to his close friend, Oscar Rie. The reception Rie gave to them was such, reports Freud, that "I thereupon determined to make no further effort to break down my state of isolation." On May 8, 1901, Freud wrote to Fliess that he had not yet "made up his mind" to send off the work. One month later, he made up his mind and sent if off, announcing to Fliess that "it will meet the gaze of an astonished public in the autumn." But nothing of the sort was to occur, and what happened next was, according to Jones, "entirely mysterious" and remains so. Freud either sent it off to Ziehen, the editor who had already accepted it, and then having sent it asked for it back. Or he sent it off to another magazine altogether, the *Journal für Psychologie und Neurologie,* whose editor, one Brodmann, refused to publish it. The upshot was that Freud returned the manuscript to a drawer for four more years. And when he did at last send it into print, it was in the journal that had accepted it in the first place.

But we are not out of the darkness and perplexities yet, for when Freud finally decided in 1905 to publish the case, he revised the work once again. There is one further touch of puzzlements.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Freud got the date of his case wrong. When he wrote or rewrote it, either in January 1901 or in 1905, he assigned the case to the autumn of 1899 instead of 1900. And he continued to date it incorrectly, repeating the error in 1914 in the "History of the Psychoanalytic Movement" and again in 1923 when he added a number of new footnotes to the essay on the occasion of its publication in the eighth volume of his *Gesammelte Schriften.* Among the many things suggested by this recurrent error is that in some sense he had still not done with Dora, as indeed I think we shall see he had not. The modern reader may be inclined to remark that these questions of date, of revision, problems of textual status and authorial uncertainties of attitude would be more suitable to a discussion of a literary text —— a poem, play, or novel —— than to a work of "science." But such a conception of the nature of scientific discourse —— particularly the modes of discourse that are exercised in those disciplines which are not preponderantly or uniformly mathematical or quantitative —— has to undergo a radical revision.

The general form of what Freud has written bears certain suggestive resemblances to a modern experimental novel. Its narrative and expository course, for example, is neither linear nor rectilinear; instead its organization is plastic, involuted, and heterogeneous, and follows spontaneously an inner logic that seems frequently to be at odds with itself; it often loops back around itself and is multidimensional in its representation of both its material and itself. Its continuous innovations in formal structure seem unavoidably to be dictated by its substance, by the dangerous, audacious, disreputable, and problematical character of the experiences being represented and dealt with, and by the equally scandalous intentions of the author and the outrageous character of the role he has had the presumption to assume. In content, however, what Freud has written is in parts rather like a play by Ibsen, or more precisely like a series of Ibsen's plays. And as one reads through the case of Dora, scenes and characters from such works as *Pillars of Society, A Doll's House, Ghosts, An Enemy of the People, The Wild Duck,* and *Rosmersholm* rise up and flit through the mind. There is, however, this difference. In this Ibsen-like drama, Freud is not only Ibsen, the creator and play-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wright; he is also and directly one of the characters in the action, and in the end suffers in a way that is comparable to the suffering of the others.

What I have been reiterating is that the case of Dora is first and last an extraordinary piece of writing, and it is to this circumstance in several of its most striking aspects that we should direct our attention. For it is a case history, a kind or genre of writing —— that is to say a particular way of conceiving and constructing human experience in written language —— that in Freud's hands became something that it never was before.

III.

The ambiguities and difficulties begin with the very title of the work, "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria." It is a fragment in the sense that its "results" are "incomplete." The treatment was "broken off at the patient's own wish," at a time when certain problems "had not been attacked and others had only been imperfectly elucidated." It follows that the analysis itself is "only a fragment," as are "the following pages" of writing which present it. To which the modern reader, flushed with the superior powers of his educated irony, is tempted to reply: how is it that this fragment is also a whole, an achieved totality, an integral piece of writing called a case history? And how is it, furthermore, that this "fragment" is fuller, richer, and more complete than the most "complete" case histories of anyone else? But there is no more point in asking such questions of Freud —— particularly at this preliminary stage of proceedings —— than there would be in posing similar "theoretical" questions to Joyce or Proust.

The work is also fragmentary, Freud continues, warming to his subject, because of the very method he has chosen to pursue; on this plan, that of nondirectional free association, "everything that has to do with the clearing-up of a particular symptom emerges piecemeal, woven into various contexts, and distributed over widely separate periods of time." Freud's technique itself is therefore fragmentary; his way of penetrating to the microstructure —— the "finer structure" as he calls it —— of a neurosis is to allow the material to emerge piecemeal. At the same time these

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fragments only *appear* to be incoherent and disparate; in actuality they eventually will be understood as members of a whole.

Furthermore, Freud goes on, there is still another "kind of incompleteness" to be found in this work, and this time it has been "intentionally introduced." He has deliberately chosen not to reproduce "the process of interpretation to which the patient's associations and communications had to be subjected, but only the results of that process." That is to say, what we have before us is not a transcription in print of a tape recording of eleven weeks of analysis but something that is abridged, edited, synthesized, and constructed from the very outset. And as if this were not enough, Freud introduces yet another context in which the work has to be regarded as fragmentary and incomplete. It is obvious, he argues, "that a single case history, even if it were complete and open to no doubt, cannot provide an answer to all questions arising out of the problem of hysteria." Thus, like a modernist writer —— which in part he is —— Freud begins by elaborately announcing the problematical status of his undertaking and the dubious character of his achievement.

Even more, like some familiar "unreliable narrator" in modernist fiction, Freud pauses at regular intervals to remind the reader of this case history that "my insight into the complex of events composing it [has] remained fragmentary," that his understanding of it remains in some essential sense permanently occluded. This darkness and constraint are the result of a number of converging circumstances, some of which have already been touched on and include the shortness of the analysis and its having been broken off by Dora at a crucial point. But it also includes the circumstance that the analysis —— any analysis —— must proceed by fragmentary methods, by analyzing thoughts and events bit by discontinuous bit. And at the end of one virtuoso passage in which Freud demonstrates through a series of referential leaps and juxtapositions the occurrence in Dora's past of childhood masturbation, he acknowledges that this is the essence of his procedure. "Part of this material," he writes, "I was able to obtain directly from the analysis, but the rest required supplementing. And, indeed, the method by which the occurrence of masturbation in Dora's case has been verified has shown us that material belonging to a single

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

subject can only be collected piece by piece at various times and in different connections." In sum the process resembles "reality" itself, a word that, as contemporary writers like to remind us should always be surrounded by quotation marks.

We are then obliged to ask —– and Freud himself more than anyone else has taught us most about this obligation —– *what else* are all these protestations of fragmentariness and incompleteness about? They refer in some measure, as Freud himself indicates in the Postscript, to a central inadequacy and determining incompleteness that he discovered only after it was too late —– the "great defect" of the case was to be located in the undeveloped, misdeveloped, and equivocal character of the "transference," of the relation between patient and physician in which so much was focused. Something went wrong in the relation between Freud and Dora —– or in the relation between Dora and Freud. But the protestations refer, I believe, to something else as well, something of which Freud was not entirely conscious. For the work is also fragmentary or incomplete in the sense of Freud's self-knowledge, both at the time of the actual case and at the time of his writing it. And he communicates in this piece of writing a less than complete understanding of himself, though like any great writer he provides us with the material for understanding some things that have escaped his own understanding, for filling in some gaps, for restoring certain fragments into wholes.

How else can we finally explain the fact that Freud chose to write up this particular history in such extensive detail? The reasons that he offers in both the Prefatory Remarks and the Postscript aren't entirely convincing —– which doesn't of course deny them a real if fractional validity. Why should he have chosen so problematic a case, when presumably others of a more complete yet equally brief kind were available? I think this can be understood in part through Freud's own unsettled and ambiguous role in the case; that he had not yet, so to speak, "gotten rid" of it; that he had to write it out, in some measure, as an effort of self-understanding —– an effort, I think we shall see, that remained heroically unfinished, a failure that nonetheless brought lasting credit with it.

(Continued on page 89)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STORIES

Gilbert Sorrentino

ANONYMOUS SKETCH OF THE WRITER

A maker of maddening lists, a lister of maddening names, a namer of glistering fakes, an acre of pains, a wicker of aches; a flatulent bore, a sucker for whores, an arthritic lout; a doubter of mythical lore, a chap who once knew semaphore; gastritis is his sorry lot, it's hairy and furry and hot in the belly; devourer of jelly and jam; the fingers oft crippled with pain of the pen; a yen for good legs in black hose, a shaker of fists; a lover of barter, art is his god, a garter adorer, a clod.

As a child he feared Hurley Lees, he bruised bashed and scraped up his knees; a fool for the prop aeroplane yet reasonably sane. What popular songs did he like? Peace. He liked many.

Each of his novels stood out a sore thumb (a bad penny). He ravaged the psyches of friends, rended and plundered their means and their ends as he bound them in fetters in frostbitten letters. What did they do to be fixed on the wall with the tinny nail of his prose? That was their wail. He knew their travail yet he froze them in language for good and for all. He was humorless, bitter and sour, they claimed. Yet in his island retreat he laughed to himself at the pictures his pen so carefully built up and framed. Some were mere anecdotes, lacking a head or a tale; others morose. Some murderous, flip, or crudely obscene. Most were tritely rou-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tine, yet many were clever. "He certainly knows how to write!" Why then did he never indite a reader's delight? A tome that would strike the public as funny (and make him some money)?

He looked out the window and counted his change, dreamed of a peach of a mouth that would kiss him, conjured a tongue sweet as honey. He groaned alone and saw the ladies he had known stroll in his imagination through his rooms in thyn arraye, after a pleasaunt gyse. When their loose gowns from their shoulders fell he'd cast his spell and they'd enact some shameless tricks. In such wise did the oaf amuse his days.

If he did not daily write his trash, or read, or weep his dwindling cash, or create his girls in undies heels and hose to adorn his gloomy room, he'd loaf. Where like a pillow on the bed, his eyes would dreamy close; into his stinking sewer (his dour sink) of a mind would intrude a zany name. Soon it would find its place in a line of the newest bore of a book that his busted brain spun out each day in the stupid delusion that it was fine. He can write all right, reviewers would say. Yet nor gleam nor ray of Yankee success lanced the dreary mess this writer made of his life.

Still, he lived, liked bugs, and (one himself) talked to boobs; wrote reviews for various journals (just once) till they got wise to his sordid views. He knew some Jews, drank booze when he could and loved wood; lay and squatted, sat and stood. In his books a chef, a baker of saddening mists, yet each foggy page had a turning of laughter, a churning of laughter, hilarious rages of bittersweet fun.

He put in his belly (his tummy!) along with his jam and his (yum yummy!) jelly, bourbon and beer, strong coffee, beans and bacon and eggs, some meat, an occasional candy or cookie or bun. In solitude, single, we know he lacked —— pardon my crudity —— nookie, and so took himself firmly in hand. (The feeling was lonely but grand.)

He rambled the past so surely ensconced in his brain, loved fires and trains. When asked by reporters the reasons arcane for his singular lack of financial success, he gently complained. The "time" was out "of" joint if not moreover, sprained, "if" not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

completely broken. So he subtly whined. A stitch in the middle saves nine for the fiddle, he sang as he wept 'neath the moon. Fooled himself into a stupor of bliss as his unfinished masterpiece hovered in front of his kisser, this lazy baboon, this drudge of an ape. Did I say that he loved seedless grapes and dark fudge without nuts?

He ogled both ladies and sluts as he gathered his rawest of sludge; which he dabbled in, babbled of, shaped into sculptures arsenically gay in the image of them those and they whom protested they done he no harm. He was firm in his crazy vocation, i.e., insulting the family of woman and man. So the rumors and gossip they rumbled and steamed, they spilled, they oozed, and they ran. (He gave not a shet nor a fack nor a domn.) Hoot! What a mon! His ex-wife (ha!ha!) had driven him mad and (haw!haw!) he her. She later appeared in his books in the flimsiest masques, a basely depraved stupid whore. 'Twas another disgustingly unfair assault by this scribbling hack of a word-grubbing scribe, this disgrace to the tribe.

What did he, this faker of gladdening twists, collector of grist and of swill, do, that he set himself up as a god in the sky, belaboring man with endless jokes, burleycue japes, mirthless pokes, and chauvinist rapes? Did misogyny reign in his head?

Rumor whispered that an old friend had found it grossly unfunny that this pal of the pen had sketched his golden blossom frau as a jar of natural honey. Who did he fock think he wuz? Again, what did he do to turn noble thought 'gainst him black, tint great souls bluer than blue?

A lit'ry essay that fired the rancor of many sweet cats was "Leo the K: Is He Now Gone Away?" —— a scurrilous, vicious, and violent slam at a man who'd o'ergiven his face to his beard. (This piece from the putrid pen of our hack hugely hinted that Kaufman, the Village Bard, had, one dark and dismal day, thrown into the trash himself away.) Another vignette, dripping venom, was called "Richard Detective: Each Inch a Dick" —— in which the calloused scribbling blob suggested that one of our mauditest of poets had his brains in his (God forgive me!) lob. Too many to mention are other assaults on the innardest country of art. Yet it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

behooves to jot down a few: the lurid, depraved and horribly blue double entendres he suggested were true in "Sheila Henry: Yearning to Screw"; the gleeful *ad hominem* slaughter of Harley in the infamous "Anton the Ax: A Bike for a Brain"; the bitter and poisonous paper on Lewis (that wizard of translucent style), "While We're Jung." So the corrosive language flowed from that noisomest crock our burrowing, borrowing worm called a mind.

Borrowing? Aye! From the base, the sublime, from the low to the high this thief took his ore. Reading a read of a novel he'd pull out a phrase or a line; he ransacked the news; squeezed out the juice from advertisements; was pleased when a song had a word he could use; in the blues he perversely found humor; from Natchez to Mobile he ranged, from the shining mind of heaven to the primordial ooze. A persistent and underground rumor ran thus: that with unparalleled insolence he stole his very characters —— all of whom (but of course) were invented by better than he. The most casual glance at his books will reveal this to be. "I know what I'm doing," he'd sneer. In an early story we find King Lear as a salesman; Ella Cinders appears in an obscene novella; in novels and plays he would tinker with Crusoe as gunman, Joseph Andrews would shit in his hat; his sister, the virginal Pam, would wantonly pose in corsets and boots and grey silken hose. The ne'er-do-well Shem, lord of the pen, would shuffle, a bum on the streets. This inky thief, jigsaw in hand, would even slice out whole sentences, phrases, grand fragments of style to give to his opera brilliant veneer, a scope and a scan his pedestrian talents alone could never come near. Was it the gnaw of the needle of failure that made him so queer? So it appears. He was weary of shabby suits straight from the doddering fifties, his torn wallet empty of cash. He wanted Brie on the beach! He wanted to sip sour mash! He rolled like a stone, blithering loss, whingeing and whining, complaining and bitching, aching and writhing and twitching and reeking of misery, penury, lost among wealthy portrayers of popular lore. Their shiny tomes did not bore the intelligent public! Their heroes and heroines caused not one snore among newspaper pundits! Their styles were not sinister products of arrogant wile masked as art!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He knew as his eversharp tool built his monstrous machines he was doomed, he was just about through. "Immoral, unstructured, unfinished, clever but fey"; "murderous, bitter, cluttered with meaningless litter"; "obscurantist mutter"; "a quitter"; "a sitter of fences"; "no work and all play"; "sheer kindness to shut him away"; "a gutter mentality"; "hostile to everything gay"; "one hoped that Studs Lonigan had had his day"; "mad overkill"; "are these second-rate characters worth all this pother?"; "a cross between Selby DeCubb and Weary O'Farrell"; "a stinking kettle of fish"; "the novelist's swan song"; "the novelist's death wish"; "no laughs in *this* barrel"; "more than just a bit petty and 'in' "; "at times he commits every professional sin"; "for a 'comic' writer, needlessly cruel"; "grating and tedious"; "he winks at the reader"; "rather thin gruel"; "self-righteous preaching and prating"; "the writer's own cleverness sinks him"; "at best, a mordant letter"; "relies mostly on rancor"; "maligns all his betters"; "vacuity is the milieu"; "he here goes too far"; "wildly destructive"; "supposedly aimed at the *au courant* few"; "very crude"; "worships and crawls at the feet of the Beat"; "just another honkie dude"; "a wise guy"; "a cynic"; "no prude"; "isn't fully a novel"; "isn't really a book"; "shows genuine loathing"; "the clinical plotting's a bore"; "his people are merely stick figures"; "a quickly tiring trick."

Yet did he not ofttimes contemplate rising or sailing or climbing into the sky, eternally azure, a snowy white cloud etched on the glorious blue?

He did.

And didn't he dream of glamorous friends who would love him forever, of crystal decanters, wonderful wines, all the concomitant items, lustrous and glowing, designed to make life worth the living?

Surely he did.

Did he not sometimes wonder why it was given to him to write these millions of words? to comb over his life for a phrase?

But of course.

What of watching the sea?

His rarely enjoyed delight.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Did he envy the wonderful people in bistros and taverns and bars?

Ha!

Did he envy the creamy mysterious stars?

More than many.

Why did he grimly endure the holes in his sweaters? Was he a bum?

The answer is no.

Wasn't he smart?

In his out-of-date fashion.

Why then wasn't he rich? Could one fairly call him a stupid galoot, a dull-witted son of a bitch?

It wouldn't be fair.

Did he at times compose a line wrought of moonlight and silver?

He did.

Shall then we forgive him his blunders, his arrogance, whining self-pity and maddening lies?

Emphatically yes.

We are saddened by the death of our friend

Adolph Gottlieb

1903–1974

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Morris Dickstein

COLD WAR BLUES:

Notes on the Culture of the Fifties

I.

The recurrent flurries of nostalgia for the 1950s —— and the hovering threat that we might yet *become* the 1950s —— have not yet issued in any deep interest in what actually happened then; I don't mean the names and dates but what life felt like to those who were there. As the sixties recede and go out of fashion, the fifties have become the blank screen on which many project fantasies of an alternative, as the thirties were then to some who cared about alternatives.

But such nostalgia works only by distortion and historical invention, whose effect can be perverse and self-destructive. If rock music seems to have its innovative edge, if it seems to founder in a decadent sophistication, we look back to the banal but energetic simplicities of fifties rock 'n' roll. If our poetry has gone too far toward free form and undisciplined subjectivity we reach for a hair shirt, as Robert Lowell did in his immense sonnet sequence *Notebook* (1970), which has gone through numberless versions without ever becoming a poem. If our political life becomes too violent and problematic we grasp at something more orderly, as a writer in *Commentary,* John Mander, did, when he eulogized the fifties as "the happiest, most stable, most rational period the Western world has known since 1914."

This is perhaps a more exact analogy than Mander would care to acknowledge. The "long summer's day" of the Edwardian peace was also the frozen smile of countless social and political hierarchies. Nearly all of Europe welcomed the war with a sense of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

release, as long as the thrill of letting go obscured the accumulated debt. In retrospect the explosive conflicts of the sixties, agonizing as they often were, unmasked another Old Regime whose convenient symbol was Eisenhower, whose substance was the increasingly decayed and irrelevant traditions of rural or small-town America, and whose stability was grounded in a suppression of grievances and new energies that could be suppressed no longer.

The political atmosphere of that time is hard to recall today. The period was shadowed by the fear of thermonuclear war yet suffused by a mood of business-as-usual, everyone in his niche. Its legislative monument was the interstate highway system, which helped transport an ever more rootless population from the farms to the cities, from the cities to the suburbs, from the South to the ghettoes, from the Midwest to California. While hymning the praise of traditional values people were learning to live without a past, on a roller coaster of technological novelty that had already begun to Americanize the world.

This whirl of social movement found no echo in the political arena. The hallmark of both foreign and domestic policy was the extremely narrow range of permissible debate. Formal democracy thrived while the real issues of the day were excluded from the domain of choice. When Adlai Stevenson raised questions about the draft and about nuclear testing in the 1956 campaign he was said to have exceeded the bounds of mainstream opinion. Obviously he was not a serious candidate. High school students could debate ad nauseam whether Red China should be admitted to the UN but no one in public life would dare take similar liberties. Allied to this was the mania of national security which ruined the lives of some, touched many others with the cold hand of fear and conformity, and helped foreclose the political options of all. Much later, the domestic achievements of Johnson's Great Society and the dramatic coups of Nixon's foreign policy were but the thawed-out imperatives of this twenty-year freeze in the political process.

I enumerate these things not to close off the question of the fifties but to underline its importance. The fifties were the seedbed of our present cultural situation and the ground against which the upheavals of the sixties sought to define themselves. The challenge of these upheavals has yet to be met and we are still

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

living with the consequences. The lure of the fifties hints that history moves like a pendulum; it speaks to our wish to have done with these problems; it tells us we can return unscathed to an idealized time before life grew complicated and we grew older. What happened in the fifties really matters, not only for what it gave rise to but for what it seems to offer us, for the way we shall choose to live.

For that reason it is impossible to limit one's evidence, as John Mander does in his *Commentary* article, to the often unreal world of foreign affairs. My own alternative, "what life felt like," is precarious but essential, for the culture gives our lives a tone and quality which may not be reflected by diplomats and presidents, which may be more truly expressed in the work of artists and intellectuals. Despite the interminable bloodbath of Vietnam, and because of it, the great changes of the past decade were ones of sensibility, awareness, attitude, not of institutions. For all the alarm of entrenched liberals and conservatives, the political changes of the sixties —— as opposed to shifts of rhetoric and mood —— were nothing if not gradual and melioristic.

The cataclysms of the moral landscape are quite another story, harder to discern because changes in sensibility resist ready generalization. What is at stake is a network of assumptions and feelings that link the individual to the wider public realities of his time. Artists and intellectuals, for all their supposed alienation from prevailing social values, often articulate these assumptions most subtly. They are daily awash in a medium of feeling and opinion, and where they do take dissident positions their resistance to the age may turn out to be crucially *of* the age. Even the formal concerns of the artist, which, like the quarrels of the intellectuals, often seem parochial to the world at large, usually reflect that world in intense miniature. The culture of an age is a unified thing, whatever its apparent contraditions. Touch it anywhere and it can reveal its secrets: the texture exposed, the part betrays the whole.

One example I'll use extensively here is the Cold War anti-Communism that predominated among intellectuals of the late forties and fifties, which weirdly refracted the political tenor of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the nation at large. Later on in 1967 in the wake of revelations that leading periodicals and cultural organizations of the postwar period had been secretly funded by the CIA, apparently as instruments of the Cold War, *Commentary,* itself in the last throes of its newfound sixties liberalism, invited some of the best-known intellectuals of the fifties to rethink their past political behavior in a symposium on "Liberal Anti-Communism Revisited." The result was a revealing lesson in the varieties of self-exculpation. Some were penitent, some impenitent; some seemed desperately embarrassed while others were indignant at being asked to reconsider, as if the Vietnam war and the CIA exposure could have any effect on the timeless truths of political philosophy.

What nearly all shared, however, was a tendency to minimize the scope and effect of their past opinions, and to make distinctions which few had been so precise about in the previous period. We were anti-Stalinist, they insisted, not antiradical or anti–Communist. Nothing disgusted us more than the garden variety of Red-baiting that followed both world wars. We were libertarians and free minds, not witch-hunters or kept men. Our independent position made us a small dissident group with little influence either on national policy in the fifties or on the climate of opinion that later made the Vietnam war possible. (At least no one bothered to add, Some of my best friends were blacklisted.)

Yet for all these protestations what future historian who examines the vagaries of intellectuals during the period will fail to observe the correspondence between the views published in *Encounter* and the government policies that made the support of *Encounter* a good investment? Nor should our historian fail to note that at a low ebb of American civil liberties Mary McCarthy wrote a novel about a faculty Machiavel who tries to save his job by *posing* as a victim of political persecution; that Robert Warshow and Leslie Fiedler wrote essays attacking the Rosenbergs and their sympathizers rather than the government which had just executed them; that Irving Kristol and others minimized the importance of McCarthy while criticizing liberals and intellectuals who were alarmed by him; that an influential group of social scientists antipathetic to McCarthy tried to blame him, in a sense, on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Left rather than the Right by associating his demagoguery with populism and the presumed dangers of ideology;[1] that Sidney Hook supported the firing of supposed Communists from schools and universities *on libertarian grounds*, since such centers of independent thought had no room for those whose minds were *by definition* unfree; that teachers and academics everywhere stood by quietly while some of their colleagues became unpersons; that Elia Kazan and others went before the House Un-American Activities Committee to beat their breasts, swear fealty, name names, tell all —— the "all" being mainly trivial gossip many years old, the detritus of left-wing political life of the thirties. These episodes but skim the surface and isolate a few conspicuous individuals, yet they tell us enough to know that our future historian may abridge certain fine distinctions intellectuals love to make, especially when they are in bad faith. Hindsight will not fail to connect their opinions with certain gross actualities of the time, including blacklists, union purges, jail terms, university firings, McCarran and Smith Acts, supinely cooperative Supreme Court decisions, to say nothing of a much wider range of political intimidation that these events helped to enforce, as the range of public policy and private opinion grew ever more narrow.

II.

The details of these Cold War episodes are hardly new and despite their maleficence I don't wish to belabor them, though I'll soon return to some of them in greater detail. My other field of evidence is not political but literary: the curious emergence of the Jewish novel into a central position in American fiction. This is not to say there was a purely Wasp hegemony over American letters before the fifties, but earlier Jewish writers like Henry Roth, Daniel Fuchs, and even Nathanael West did not gain substantial recognition until they were republished in the wake of the Jewish-American renaissance of the fifties (championed by an aggressive new generation of Jewish critics like Howe, Fiedler, and Kazin, themselves no mean flowers of that awakening).

1. See the essays in *The Radical Right*, edited by Daniel Bell (1955, 1963) and a critique by Michael Paul Rogin in *The Intellectuals and McCarthy* (1967).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If the Jewish writers of the thirties, as writers, failed even to survive the decade, the generation of the forties remained in its own way *maudit* and unfulfilled —— and hardly acknowledged today except for its star performers. In a sense they were writers too talented but also too restless and unconfident to pursue a single line of work. Like many of their non-Jewish contemporaries —— Randall Jarrell comes to mind —— they were intellectuals and men of letters rather than novelists and poets. Several —— including Delmore Schwartz, Paul Goodman, and Isaac Rosenfeld —— made their mark as critics and essayists, and in fiction they tend to assume a no-nonsense tone of plain talk which, despite a leaven of whimsy and fantasy, reveals a distrust of the imaginative process when it gets too far from "real life." They gravitate toward small forms and big ideas, which they sometimes manipulate so brilliantly that they overwhelm the fictional context. They distrust eloquence and Art but remain beautifully close to the vital facts of experience, especially the experience of intellectuals caught in a wild, unsettling rush of acculturation, a crazy quilt of America. For all their attraction to ideas they never forget that intellectuals have mothers and fathers, friends and lovers, and that ideas are hatched by people, who can be elated, changed, or even destroyed by them.

Bellow is a characteristic member of this generation, its only survivor, its only "success" as a novelist. His friend Isaac Rosenfeld is its fallen soldier, but Delmore Schwartz remains its most fascinating and least-appreciated prophet. A *wunderkind* who never fulfilled his matchless promise, he descended increasingly into paranoia and isolation during the latter part of his life. By the time of his terrible, anonymous death in a shabby hotel in 1966 he had entirely faded from public view. The ripples of interest that followed first his death and then the publication of a thick volume of selected essays in 1970 consisted mainly of testimony from old friends to his extraordinarily vital personal presence.

As a writer he is hard to characterize or pin down, and few have tried. Younger readers seem not to have heard of him, though his work is one long brooding adolescence, and a scholar like Allen Guttman, whose book *The Jewish Writer in America* aims at a certain comprehensiveness, gives him no space at all. The finale of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Guttman's work is a long section on "Mr. Bellow's America," with chapters on every one of Bellow's novels, but Schwartz's great stories "America! America!" and "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" evidently don't belong to the semiofficial canon of explicity "Jewish" writing. Yet, as much as Bellow's first book, *Dangling Man* (1944), they do introduce themes that would become decisive in the Jewish literary renaissance of the fifties.

Yet even a background has its background: behind the awkward new sensibility of the 1940s lay not only the disruptions of the war but the adventures and sorrows of Marxism. "Marxism is in relative eclipse," wrote Edmund Wilson in 1940, after nearly a decade of immersion in it. "An era in its history has ended." Nowhere is that eclipse more visible than in the work of the young writers. The introspective diarist whose mask Bellow wears in *Dangling Man* begins by attacking his age as "an era of hardboiled–dom" dominated by a belief in action rather than self-knowledge. He writes in 1942 when the obligations of wartime patriotism had replaced the pressures of social activism but the thrust is broadly aimed. In keeping a journal and keeping to his room, Joseph —— whose name recalls Kafka's antihero —— announces a new turn in the direction of the novel, away from Hemingway and from the proletarian writers who had appropriated his tight-lipped manner to their own ideological purpose. *Dangling Man* is the strangest, most claustral of war novels, a late, mild flower of the Underground Man tradition, morosely ideological in its refusal of all ideology.

Dangling Man would probably be forgotten today if Bellow's later work had not kept it in view. *The World is a Wedding* (1948), which collects Delmore Schwartz's stories of a decade, *is* forgotten, perhaps *the* neglected gem of the fiction of the forties. Schwartz received recognition mainly as a poet but neither his poetry nor his criticism have worn well —— which is to say, survived the period of uncritical adulation of the great modernist writers. Everything he wrote shows a good deal of stiffness and self-consciousness, but when the hermetic, elliptical intensities of Rilke, Eliot, and the symbolists merged with the gauche poeticism of his own language and sensibility the results could be disastrous. Where his poetry is alternately hermetic and "sincere" his critical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

manner is uniformly earnest and labored. Except for a few first-rate pieces like "The Duchess' Red Shoes" (a critique of Lionel Trilling) his longer essays offer access to his mind more than they illuminate the object. Only in his stories does that mind become conscious of itself, for only there does his strange ruminative voice work dramatically. Instead of donning the robes of abstract cultural authority he makes his style and personality part of his subject, part of the problem.

I can't resist quoting an example of this style from "New Year's Eve," one of three stories that concern "a youthful author of promise" with a name —— Shenandoah Fish —— even more improbable than the author's own: "Shenandoah and Nicholas travelled crosstown in a street-car, standing up in the press and brushing against human beings they would never see again. They continued their argument which on the surface concerned the question, should Nicholas go to a party where he would for the most part be a stranger? This was a type of the academic argument, since the street-car slowly went crosstown, bearing the young men to the argument's conclusion." The awkward, chiselled quality of Schwartz's critical prose is on view here but the tone is wry rather than earnest, a volatile mixture of irony and affection. A moment later the argument deepens and we see the other passengers "listening in amazement to their virtually ontological discussions of character." Schwartz's own boyish mind is just the sort that bears down on experience in an "ontological" way, risking absurdity in an effort to both express and overcome its own sense of isolation, its singular intensity. His stories are populated by images of himself, named like himself, who become both the meat of his satire and the vehicles of his aspiration to art, genius, and fame. Such stories as "New Year's Eve" and "The World is a Wedding" dwell lovingly on the preciosities of urban intellectuals and artists *manqués* whose quasi-bohemianism is enforced by the depression rather than founded on talent or creative energy. Contemptuous of a middle class which refuses to bow down to them, cut off from their origins yet without much inward direction, they devolve into a brittle cynicism and cliquishness that leaves them cut off from "real life," trapped in their own anxious feelings of superiority.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Delmore Schwartz's attitude toward these characters is complicated: there must be a great deal of himself and his friends in them, yet he lays bare their weaknesses with a scalpel. Surely *he* is the "youthful author of promise" whose name betrays his own divided soul. Ironically, the stories as a whole are hobbled by the same sort of claustral self-involvement for which he tellingly indicts his characters, as if the Hemingway code of action had been replaced by a cult of sensitivity so stringent that no action whatever is possible. Taken by themselves these stories would seem to confirm Irving Howe's suggestion that the sensibility of the New York intellectuals was too nervous and special for major creative work.

The major action of the stories is conversation: despite his irony Schwartz lovingly orchestrates his characters' talk. We are told of Rudyard Bell, who presides over a circle of would-be geniuses in "The World is a Wedding," that "the volley of the conversation, as at a tennis match, was all he took [away] with him. For what he wanted and what satisfied him was the activity of his own mind. This need and satisfaction kept him from becoming truly interested in other human beings, though he sought them out all the time." Surely Delmore Schwartz is exposing himself as well as Rudyard, for in his own talk he too "was like a travelling virtuoso who performs brilliant set-pieces," but in his self-diagnosis the author becomes a Rudyard who knows and transcends himself. Like Rudyard, Delmore is an Artist and talker but his bohemian contempt for the middle class is superseded by a fascination with his origins and identity. After Schwartz's death Dwight Macdonald, with his usual amiable obtuseness, wrote that he could never understand his friend Delmore's "obsession with his Jewish childhood." Paradoxically then, his self-involvement forced him to become truly interested in other human beings. Only they could help him decode his own secret, and it's precisely this obsession that propels his fiction from random satire and self-dramatization to an entirely different order of material.

In "America! America!" (his best story) and "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" (his most famous one) Schwartz turns from the narrow circle of his contemporaries to the enigma of the previous generation. Both stories focus on the formative bonds between

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

parents and children and the infinite abyss that separates them, that especially separates the immigrant generation from its "American" offspring. "America! America!" is about the declining fortunes of the Baumann family, which devolve from the father's prosperous importance in the immigrant social world to the chronic failures of the clever, maladaptive, ne'er-do-well sons. As in Joseph Conrad's novels, however, half the interest of the story comes from its teller, in this case Mrs. Fish, Shenandoah's mother, to whom he seems to be listening for the first time, thunderstruck by the complex world from which he came (and which lies accusingly outside his ken as an artist), struck too by the sensitivity of the speaker, whose intuitive insight into "the difficulties of life" shames him for his arrogance and self-importance. "Shenandoah was exhausted by his mother's story. He was sick of the mood in which he had listened, the irony and contempt which had taken hold of each new event. He had listened from such a distance that what he saw was an outline, a caricature, and an abstraction. How different it might seem, if he had been able to see these lives from the inside, looking out."

The whole story is brilliantly punctuated by such notations, by the undulations of self-awareness in this writer as he is flooded by the past and by the alien world of the middle class. "He reflected on his separation from these people, and he reflected that in every sense he was removed from them by thousands of miles, or by a generation, or by the Atlantic Ocean. . . . Whatever he wrote as an author did not enter into the lives of these people, who should have been his genuine relatives and friends, for he had been surrounded by their lives since the day of his birth, and in an important sense, even before then. . . . The lower middle-class of Shenandoah's parents had engendered perversions of its own nature, children full of contempt for every thing important to their parents."[2]

2. Compare the following reminiscence by Alfred Kazin: "It was not for myself that I was expected to shine, but for them —— to redeem the constant anxiety of their existence. I was the first American child, their offering to the strange new God; I was to be the monument of their liberation from the shame of being —— what they were. . . . Our families and teachers seemed tacitly agreed to be a little ashamed of what we were." —— *A Walker in the City*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Schwartz's theme has more than a personal dimension. He is sounding a note that goes back 150 years to the first stirrings of romanticism in Europe: the alienation of the artist from middle-class society. This was an especial dogma in the wake of the modernist movement of the 1920s, whose difficult art, addressed to a purified elite, was sometimes built on an attack on modern life in toto, and in the wake of the radicalism of the thirties, which identified the middle class as the special villain of contemporary society. A staggering number of contemporary writers were strangers in a strange land: Americans in Europe, Poles writing in English, Anglo-Irishmen living by their wits, self-exiled questers like Lawrence, hunting for a new spiritual home. Such deracination could be a source of strength. As Isaac Rosenfeld argued in 1944, "marginal men" could have a perspective on modern society unavailable to the insider. Delmore Schwartz echoes this theme in an essay on Eliot: "Modern life may be compared to a foreign country in which a foreign language is spoken. Eliot is the international hero because he made the journey to the foreign country."

Where this view of modern life prevails the Jew, especially the secular Jewish intellectual, becomes the quintessential modern man: doubly alienated, from the prevailing national culture and from his own traditional culture, uprooted from the European pale and yet cut off from his own uprooted parents. But the artist who is truly interested in other human beings —— and has some concern for his own sanity —— soon comes to the limits of alienation as a viable ground for his work. (This is why so many modernists, like Eliot and Yeats, like Lawrence in Mexico, fell eventually into eccentric nostrums of pseudotradition in religion or politics.) This is what Shenandoah recognizes as he hears his mother telling the story of the Baumanns, and surely no writer has inserted a more crushing insight into the strengths and limitations of his own work: "Shenandoah had thought of this gulf and perversion before, and he had shrugged away his unease by assuring himself that this separation had nothing to do with the important thing, which was the work itself. But now as he listened, as he felt uneasy and sought to dismiss the emotion, he began to feel that he was wrong to suppose that the separation, the contempt, and the gulf had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nothing to do with his work; perhaps, on the contrary, it was the center; or perhaps it was the starting-point and compelled the innermost motion of the work to be flight, or criticism, or denial, or rejection."

Delmore Schwartz's best stories move away from this starting-point, toward an empathy for other lives, but they never fully evade these limitations. They are exquisitely wrought but excruciatingly self-conscious. No one would call them expansive. Their main theme remains that of the isolated self and the mysteries of identity that can never be solved but never evaded. For the author himself the final paranoia and anonymity, the trail of broken friendships and brilliant memories, to say nothing of the deterioration of his work, were the final seal of the same failure.

III.

The very title of Saul Bellow's first novel suggests its kinship with Delmore Schwartz's work, almost more than the book itself. As William Phillips has aptly remarked, Bellow's Joseph dangles "with both feet on the ground." (His resemblance to the Underground Man is skin-deep.) Not until *Herzog* (1964), his retrospective summation of the cultural life of the postwar period, would Bellow fully convey the glory and anguish of the deracinated Jewish intellectual of that time. What makes *Dangling Man* prophetic of a new literature and sensibility is its intent focus of the theme of the isolated self. Where Herzog and Tommy Wilhelm (in *Seize the Day*) will desperately reach out to people to overcome their almost unbearable sense of disconnection, Joseph attenuates all human connection in order to experiment on himself, to sound every inward note. *Dangling Man* is literally a book about a man who keeps a journal ("to talk to myself"): "and if I had as many mouths as Siva has arms and kept them going all the time, I still could not do myself justice." Severed from his job, not yet in the army, out of touch with wife, friends, and family, scarcely able to read, Joseph is performing an ontological experiment on the self, acting out a dream of absolute freedom that is the flip-side of the coin of alienation. In its small and weightless way *Dangling Man* foreshadows the metaphysics of the self, the elusive mysteries of personality, that would dominate the fiction of the fifties —— the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

legion of small novels which would recoil from the Promethean extremes of modernism and naturalism to take refuge in craft, psychology, and moral allegory.

One ingredient of these new novels of sensibility would be the abandonment of the public world that had provided much of the terrain of the great novels —— to say nothing of the terrain of Jewish millennial aspirations —— politics, class, manners and mores, even the very feel of the streets. In a shrewd and ambivalent review of Bernard Malamud's extraordinary collection of stories, *The Magic Barrel* (1958), Alfred Kazin commented that "his world is all too much an inner world —— one in which the city streets, the houses, the stores, seem, along with the people who broodingly stand about like skeletons, some with flesh, always just about to fold up, to disappear into the sky. . . . People flit in and out of each other's lives like bad dreams."

How different from this or from any other Jewish fiction of the forties and fifties is a book like Daniel Fuchs's *Summer in Williamsburg,* first published in 1934, ten years before *Dangling Man.* When Fuchs's novels were reissued in the early sixties much was made of the fabulistic, "poetic" side, as if they could only be appreciated in the wake of a moral allegorist like Malamud. Actually, the great strength of the books is their feeling for the life of the streets, the Runyonesque "low company" of youthful gangs in Williamsburg and Jewish mobsters in the Catskills, a chapter of social history quickly forgotten when the Jews became more respectable and the Jewish novel more morally austere. In Fuchs the moral temperature is low —— he is notably ham-handed in portraying the religious life of his Jews, a more inward subject. He is a folklorist, an anthropologist of street life rather than a purveyor of moral parables. For all his freedom from the cant of proletarian writing he remains in essence a 1930s realist; for him life is with the people.

Well, Daniel Fuchs folded up shop after three novels and went off to make his fortune in the great world —— Hollywood. Delmore Schwartz's characters need have no truck with the world because they are Artists, too pure to be responsible, or responsive. Bellow never allows his characters that exit. His Joseph is explicity *not* an artist, despite his diary writing; he claims no higher moral

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

license to drop out, adheres to no adversary community of the alienated, finds no salvation in "acts of the imagination": "I have no talent at all for that sort of thing. My talent, if I have one at all, is for being a citizen, or what is today called, most apologetically, a good man. Is there some sort of personal effort I can substitute for the imagination?" But this is precisely the talent Joseph never uses, the effort he can never make. Compared with Fuchs Bellow is deeply involved in the moral and communitarian strain of the Jewish tradition. Joseph claims to seek a social equivalent for the profound commitment of the artist. But the final gesture by which he abolishes his alienation is ominous: he puts himself up for induction. Of course this is no Vietnam but a "just" war, one Joseph says he believes in, but the satisfaction he expects is quite different from that of defeating the Germans. The bittersweet last lines of the book make clear that the dream of freedom has given way to an equally absolute dream of adhesion: "I am in other hands, relieved of self-determination, freedom cancelled. Hurray for regular hours! And for the supervision of the spirit! Long live regimentation!"

There is a good deal of self-irony in these lines, and Bellow could hardly be said to endorse their vision of the good life. But I call them ominous for they anticipate a great deal in Bellow's later work, from Augie March's opening chant that "I am an American, Chicago bred," to Herzog's polemics against "the Wasteland outlook, the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation," to Mr. Sammler's tract against the moral and political radicalism of the sixties, his defense of "civilization" against the "petted intellectuals" who attack it "in the name of perfect instantaneous freedom." Bellow's turn in the fifties toward accommodation with American society and his increasing hostility toward intellectuals who criticized it are quite well known, though few have noticed that the pattern of self-immolation goes back as far as his first book. This would be of little importance except to students of Bellow's development were it not representative of the whole intellectual climate of the fifties. The *Partisan Review* symposium on "Our Country and Our Culture" in 1952 is only the most famous indication of this new mood, which spread at just the time our country was prosecuting its most dubious adventures: the Cold War and its domestic correlative, the mania of internal security.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's true that some intellectuals, especially literary intellectuals, did try to maintain an adversary stance. Delmore Schwartz, for example, ever faithful to the modernist mentality, contributed to the symposium a defense of "critical nonconformism" as against the new spirit of accommodation. But the whole brief, like the term itself, is lamentably abstract and typically confined to the cultural sphere: a defense of highbrow values against the incursions of mass and middlebrow taste. This was the usual tack of "adversary" intellectuals of that day; it suggested a strict hierarchy of cultural values with you-know-who at the top. (Even Harold Rosenberg accused sociologists of "mass culture" of secretly *liking* the stuff! Gasp!) Only the smallest handful of independent intellectuals effectively focused their criticism where it was most needed: on political decisions, on aggregations of social and economic power, on questions of civil liberties which then affected so many lives.

Thus it would be fair to say that the residual intransigence of some (mostly literary) intellectuals and the newfound Americanism of other (mostly political) intellectuals amounted to the same thing. The political intellectuals sang the virtues of American life, with its pluralism and pragmatism, its procedure by consensus and its presumed freedom from ideology and moralism —— this in the age of John Foster Dulles! —— and excoriated the illusions of liberals, radicals, Popular Front types, and strict constructionists of the Bill of Rights (like Justices Black and Douglas). The literary intellectuals, while maintaining the cult of alienation, simply abandoned politics to pursue private myths and fantasies, to devote their work to the closet intensities of the isolated self or isolated personal relationships. The concept of alienation lost its social content and took on an increasingly religious and metaphysical cast. European existentialism and crisis theology became an incalculably great influence on the mood of the fifties —— shorn, however, of their political matrix. The moral and psychological Sartre of the forties was admitted. The political Sartre of the fifties was ignored or ridiculed —— then replaced by Camus, whose emphasis on the absurdity of the human condition and nostalgia for a lost simplicity of being were more painlessly assimilated, and answered to the dominant mood.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IV.

What makes all this heartbreaking is the simple fact: though the intellectuals lost interest in politics, politics itself went marching on, shamefully —— desperately in need of critical scrutiny and principled antagonism. In exploring the climate of opinion of the fifties I don't mean to blame America alone for the Cold War or to slight the terror of the Stalinist monolith and the fatuity of its American apologists. I don't mean to suggest that intellectuals should have made common cause with the Party, as Sartre did for a brief period in France, a party that was at once servile and manipulative, philistine and morally and politically bankrupt. Yet, as the historian Allen J. Matusow has written, "the great irony of McCarthyism is that it developed in the absence of any real internal Communist menace; for by 1950 Communism in America had lost whatever influence it once possessed."

However true this may be for the country at large it does not quite apply to the intellectuals. For them the internal menace was real, within the culture, within themselves, like their Jewishness, always threatening a return of the repressed. This fear helps explain the vengeful confessional tone of some political writing during the period ("couch liberalism," as Harold Rosenberg dubbed it). Behind the guilt and animosity looms a burning memory of the thirties, the inculpation in a Great Lie. Even those who were still in knee-pants then felt that they had somehow been taken in, that all radicalism, all politics, had been tainted irrevocably by Stalinism, and that all intellectuals were potential dupes unless ideology gave way to "realism" and complicity were absolved by confession.

It would be hard to find more vicious examples of serious political writing than the first three essays in Leslie Fiedler's *An End to Innocence* (1955), devoted in turn to the Hiss case, the Rosenberg case, and to "McCarthy and the Intellectuals." Fiedler's involvement in the political life of the thirties was practically nil,[3] yet he endlessly harries his subjects with their failure to confess

3. Though in a later book, *Being Busted* (1969), written in a different political climate, after he himself had fallen victim to an official frame-up, he fondly wheels out some schoolboy adventures in radicalism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and takes a confessional tone himself but has nothing to reveal except some "illusions," which quickly turn out to be the illusions of others. Joseph K. in Kafka's *Trial* is charged with no crime but rather stands "accused of guilt"; Fiedler is not content to malign the guilty: he indicts a whole generation for its "innocence."

What lies behind this puzzling assault on language and sense is a psychodrama on the theme of "growing up," in which radicalism and social hope equal childishness, while maturity demands the acceptance of middle-class values, society as it is, the tragic ambiguity of all worldly commitment, all action.[4] This coming to maturity for the once-alienated intellectual requires the traumatic *rite de passage* of public repentance. Thus Whittaker Chambers qualifies as a tragic figure, the "scorned squealer" who deserves our empathy since he suffers for all of us. Alger Hiss, on the other hand, is a "hopeless liar," "the Popular Front mind at bay." Why? Not simply because he is guilty, though Fiedler hasn't the faintest doubt of that, but because he refuses to put away childish things: unwilling to "speak aloud a common recognition of complicity," he cuts himself off from "the great privilege of confession."

The religious (and markedly Christian) tone and fervor of these bizarre comments is even more intense in the essay on the Rosenbergs, which after twenty pages of vituperation concludes that "we should have offered them grace," yes grace —— not mercy or clemency but grace, "even to those who most blasphemously deny their own humanity" (that is, by refusing to confess). The Rosenbergs should have been spared not for *their* sake but to ratify our own godlike virtue and superiority. America! America! indeed.

4. A glance through the back volumes of *Commentary* or *Encounter* would disclose many curious playlets on this theme, for instance Alan Westin, "Libertarian Precepts and Subversive Realities: Some Lessons Learned in the School of Experience," *Commentary* (January 1955), an article whose very title speaks volumes. Many civil liberties, it suggests, are fine abstractions, but must bend to meet the hard realities of subversion. Libertarians, however well intentioned, who insist on "an absolutist framework," who are "unwilling to make the necessary compromises," risk leaving society "without the means of *making necessary judgments and distinctions* in coping with the formidable problem offered by the agents, *conscious or otherwise*, of a hostile foreign power." (my italics)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fiedler refuses even to entertain the possibility that Hiss or the Rosenbergs might not have all that much to confess. 'Twere to consider too curiously to consider so. To consider it would shatter his faith in American institutions: "One would have to believe the judges and public officials of the United States to be not merely the Fascists the Rosenbergs called them, but monsters, insensate beasts." But the record, even the record available when Fiedler wrote, provides abundant evidence for the most extreme judgment. There is no more horrifying document of Cold War hysteria than Judge Kaufman's notorious remarks as he sentenced the couple to death. Full of inflamed rhetoric about the deadly struggle with Communism, the "challenge to our very existence," he accused them of "devoting themselves to the Russian ideology of denial of God, denial of the sanctity of the individual and aggression against free men everywhere instead of serving the cause of liberty and freedom."

> I consider your crime worse than murder. . . . I believe your conduct in putting into the hands of the Russians the A-bomb years before our best scientists predicted Russia would perfect the bomb has already caused, in my opinion, the Communist aggression in Korea, with the resultant casualties exceeding fifty thousand and who knows but that millions more of innocent people may pay the price of your treason. Indeed, by your betrayal you undoubtedly have altered the course of history to the disadvantage of our country.

Never mind that scientists then and since have labeled the A-bomb charge simplistic nonsense. All the frustrations of postwar foreign policy, all our fantasies of an enemy within to which this nation of immigrants has proved especially vulnerable, demanded a scapegoat. President Eisenhower went even further in his last-minute refusal of clemency: "I can only say that, by immeasurably increasing the chances of atomic war, the Rosenbergs may have condemned to death tens of millions of innocent people."[5] Who can establish innocence for what has not yet happened? Who dare ask mercy for the destruction of the world?

What these judges and public officials do so grossly, what

5. I take these quotations from Walter and Miriam Schneir's excellent brief on the case, *Invitation to an Inquest* (1965).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fiedler and Robert Warshow —— whose essay on the Rosenbergs is a companion piece to Fiedler's —— do more ingeniously, is to completely dehumanize the Rosenbergs and turn their execution into an impersonal act, almost a merciful one. (This casts a rather sickly glow on Judge Kaufman's banner of "the sanctity of the individual." As individuals the Rosenbergs were accorded not much more sanctity than the defendants in the Moscow purge trials.) In line with the strategy of blaming the victim, they accuse the Rosenbergs of having destroyed themselves —— by adhering to ideology, by becoming a "case." Both Fiedler and Warshow analyze the published prison letters of the couple to demonstrate their vulgarity of mind, "the awkwardness and falsity," says Warshow, "of the Rosenbergs' relations to culture, to sports, and to themselves." The supposed meaning is that "almost nothing really belonged to them, not even their own experience." The implicit moral is that they were so empty, so crude, so bereft of style that there was nothing for the electric chair to kill. It takes Fiedler with his talent for blatant absurdity to announce this message clearly: "They failed in the end to become martyrs or heroes, or even men. *What was there left to die?*" (my italics)

What all this postmortem textual criticism with its vengefulness and personal animosity tells us about the issues in the case is hard to fathom, but from our vantage point it tells us much about the Cold War mentality of 1953 (especially as expressed in the two leading journals of intellectual anti-Communism, *Commentary* and *Encounter,* where the articles first appeared). For all their political, even propagandistic intent, both essays show an eerie displacement of politics into aesthetics: issues of power and justice —— indeed, of human life itself —— get argued in terms of taste and style. For these two clever critics the Rosenberg letters are a godsend, a text, life in an orderly bundle. In their mixture of high-minded platitudes about politics and middlebrow cultural opinions the letters provide an ideal foil for the myopic fifties highbrow with an axe to grind, for the literary mentality with a tendentious cult of style. The unity of personality —— in this case the Popular Front personality —— that E.L. Doctorow would grasp so beautifully in his novel about the case (*The Book of Daniel*) completely eluded Fiedler and Warshow, or proved too threatening for them. The strange synthesis of Communism, Judaism,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

idealism, and Americanism, so characteristic of the Popular Front period (with its stress on Communism as "twentieth-century Americanism"), they could only read as proof of mendacity, though it's familiar enough to anyone who grew up with an uncle in the Party or a parent in a CIO union.

For Fiedler and Warshow the vulgar middlebrow Jew is a cultural embarrassment who must be exorcised, so that the highbrow critic can confirm his place in the kingdom of art. The Jewish radical, the quaint Popular Front "progressive," will be sacrificed so that the children of immigrants, the despised intellectuals with their foreign ideas, can become full-fledged Americans.

Years earlier Warshow himself had criticized a novel by Lionel Trilling for its failure to portray the "deep psychological drives" involved in the Stalinist experience and its aftermath, and for suppressing the dominant Jewish involvement in the radical politics of the thirties. That was in 1947. By 1953 when the Rosenbergs were finally killed that Jewish element had been trumpeted for years in the world's headlines. The deep psychological drives of a Warshow or a Fiedler are as understandable, however unforgivable, as the quiet terror of many ordinary Jews that a pogrom was in the works (despite the thoughtfulness of the courts in providing the Rosenbergs with a Jewish judge and Jewish prosecutors). What was buried with the Rosenbergs, a few months after Eisenhower took office, was two decades of American (and Jewish) Marxism, and two centuries of a different innocence from the kind Fiedler attacks: the innocence of a nation convinced it could play the world's good citizen and moral arbiter. "Watch out!" wrote Sartre the day after the executions. "America has the rabies!" If the substance of idealism was shattered, however, the rhetoric and its illusions lived on to fight another day. It took the Vietnam war to expose the emperor's clothes and shake his righteous self-assurance.

V.

I have put such emphasis on the Rosenberg case because of its magnitude but also because by the early fifties the Jew was well on his way to becoming the American Everyman, as the black would be in the early sixties. In the wake of the Holocaust the fate of the Jew, to many, had become a parable of the human condi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion —— a drama of pointless, horrendous suffering which revealed the modern dimensions of terror and evil. Now, in the postwar period, the relentless hunt for traces of Communism in American life was bound to have an inordinate effect on the Jews, who had been as deeply implicated as any group in the radicalism of the thirties and the fellow-traveling of the forties. In the essays of Fiedler and Warshow, as in the fiction of Bellow and Delmore Schwartz, we feel the impact of these new shocks: we see evidence of the Jewish psyche taking stock of itself, revising itself, recoiling from its recent historical role.

Red-baiting did not begin with Senator McCarthy, a late-comer who appeared when some of the battles had already been fought. The forgetting of the thirties and of the wartime Russian alliance had been in full swing in American society since 1946, with liberals like Humphrey vying with right-wingers for initiative on the issue. It was President Truman who created a massive loyalty–review apparatus for government employees early in 1947, though this probably affected Jews less than the purge of left-wing unions in the CIO and the hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee on the entertainment industry. By 1949 the leaders of the Communist Party had already been prosecuted under the dubious terms of the Smith Act, which had been passed with Communist support in 1940 as an instrument against Fascism.[6] When McCarthy made his famous list-waving debut as a Red–hunter in Wheeling, West Virginia, in February 1950, he was seizing and exploiting —— and soon personifying —— a situation years in the making and especially ripe for a right-wing demagogue.

It happens that 1950 was also the year that Bernard Malamud began publishing the stories that were eventually collected in *The Magic Barrel*. Nowhere do we see the revised version of the Jewish psyche more clearly expressed, more poignantly imagined, than in his work. Needless to say his books show no trace of the McCarthy period, no trace of politics of any sort (at least until the flawed historical novel *The Fixer* in 1966); this is one thing that helps

6. On this point and others see the spirited and generally fair-minded history of the American Communist Party by Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, published in 1957.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

make him one of the quintessential writers of the fifties. "Revised" is an odd word to apply to him since he is the most deeply traditional of the Jewish novelists, traditional in his unrivaled grasp of the Jewish imagination of disaster, traditional in his authentic stock of immigrant and second-generation characters, traditional above all in the very feel of his stories —— his preference for moral fables and realistic storytelling over modernist experiments in technique and narrative consciousness. In fact it is Malamud's genius in *The Magic Barrel* and in his best novel, *The Assistant* (1957), to combine a distilled accuracy of urban Jewish speech and scene with a mode of poetic parable reminiscent of Hawthorne, or of his older Yiddish contemporary, I. B. Singer. But this succeeds only within a narrow imaginative range. Malamud's best work is built around a few obsessive metaphors and situations. From the pathetic little grocery store in *The Assistant* to the actual prison in *The Fixer* to the abandoned tenement in *The Tenants* (1971) he sees the world in Pascal's terms as a prisonhouse from which we are led off one by one to die. His protagonists, whose names are as similar as his titles, are all rooted in the *schlemiel* figure of the Jewish folk tradition: antiheroes thwarted at every turn, sometimes comically, sometimes horrifyingly —— ordinary souls with a rare talent for catastrophe. To be a Jew is to suffer —— this is the simple moral equation at the heart of *The Assistant* —— and the only proper response to suffering is quiet stoicism and stubborn if hopeless decency. Morris Bober, the grocer, is a Good Man, for all the good that does him.

If the prisonhouse metaphor suggests the influence of existentialism (or a parallel development), the theme of suffering and endurance is more authentically Jewish, distilling as it does much of the grimmest of Jewish historical experience, so apocalyptically renewed in this century with the destruction of the European communities. But it is one thing —— though perhaps too limited —— to convey the experience of suffering, to capture the banal, grinding agony of the small shopkeeper eking out a marginal living; this is a heartrending achievement (though I feel that, intent on an allegory of Man Alone, he screens out the compensatory joys of religious, communal, or family life). But it is quite another thing to put a high moral valuation on this agony; there is a strain in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Malamud's work that is more Christian than Jewish, an emphasis on bearing the cross, on suffering-for-others, on salvation through suffering. When Frank Alpine, the Italian assistant, asks the old storekeeper, "Why do you suffer, Morris?" he calmly answers, "I suffer for you." At the heart of Malamud's work is a quasi–religious theme of salvation, as when Alpine finally becomes a Jew and takes on his back the same wretched store, the same wretched life, that had crushed his dead employer.

What do these timeless patterns of suffering and redemption have to do with the 1950s when they were conceived? There is little sense of specific historical time in *The Assistant*. Though nominally set in the 1930s its historical matrix is as shadowy as its New York milieu is claustral and specterlike. Yet I believe this tells us a great deal about the period when it was written. As Ruth Wisse shows in her fine study *The Schlemiel as Modern Hero*, the schlemiel character became dear to Jewish folklore as a vehicle of spiritual transcendence amid constrained and sometimes desperate social circumstances. As in farce, where the most extreme violence is rendered harmless and absurd, the schlemiel, usually a comic figure, provides a catharsis of catastrophe and pain, a way of coping. Sholom Aleichem, in adapting this folk motif, Wisse says, "conceived of his writing as a solace for people whose situation was so ineluctably unpleasant that they might as well laugh. The Jews of his works are a kind of schlemiel people, powerless and unlucky, but psychologically, or, as one used to say, spiritually, the victors in defeat." Maurice Samuel makes a similar point about Sholom Aleichem's "application of a fantastic technique that the Jews had developed over the ages. . . . a technique of avoidance and sublimation. . . . They had found the trick of converting disaster into a verbal triumph, applying a sort of Talmudic ingenuity of interpretation to events they could not handle in their reality." The schlemiel (or the schlemiel people) achieves a victory of mind or heart, even in the shadow of the iron fist.

Yet such a strategy can be deeply quietistic and evasive —– quite literally "fantastic," as Samuel says —– especially in circumstances less constricting than the Russian Pale or the Polish ghetto. Even there, as currents of socialism, Zionism, and the Hebrew Enlightenment spread among the people, some of Sholom Aleichem's contemporaries were scornful of these folk attitudes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and psychological habits. Wisse suggests that the most famous schlemiel story in Yiddish literature, Y. L. Peretz's "Bontshe the Silent," which is "now widely regarded as a study of sainthood, is actually a socialist's exposure of the grotesquerie of suffering silence; Chaim Nachman Bialik's response to the infamous Kishinev pogrom was outrage against the *victims* who flee or hide, pretending that vengeance will come from God." The controversy that has flared repeatedly over Jewish behavior under Nazi occupation and in the death-camps is an extension of the same quarrel, the same anguish, on an immensely more terrible scale.

In its own way then, Bernard Malamud's work can be seen as one kind of response to the frozen and quietly fear-ridden political atmosphere of the McCarthy and Eisenhower years. This is not to say that it's not deeply imagined, with profound roots in the Jewish psyche and the Jewish moral tradition. Yet that tradition has many branches —— not simply its line of Jacob, sensitive, wily, domestic, passive, fed by mother love, but also its thwarted line of Esau, hairy hunter, "activist," doomed favorite of the father. The Jewish novel of the 1950s is a reversion to the line of Jacob, *an atonement for Jewish radicalism* that is also perfectly in tune with the wider currents of the age: ruminative, private, morally austere and self-conscious, apolitical.

Finally, the literature and politics of the period are one. There is no special "key" to the sensibility of the age: almost anything works if we turn it right and press it hard. But the Jewish novel works especially well. The fifties were a great period for home and family, for getting and spending, for cultivating one's garden. All that is reflected in its writing. But its spokesmen also call it an Age of Anxiety; behind its material growth hovers a quiet despair, whose symbols are the Bomb and the still-vivid death-camps and a fear of Armageddon that rings true even in the monstrous phrases of a Judge Kaufman. But this anxiety is metaphysical and hermetic, closed in upon itself: the Bomb evokes despair rather than anger or opposition. The Jewish novel reflects this spirit and ministers to it, for it is literally overwrought —— anguish hemmed in by form —— offering finally the uneasy absolution of art for a torment whose origin it cannot know and whose course it cannot alter.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POEMS

THE ARCHEOLOGY

I

My first god was a tenement:
Warty red bricks, a cast iron ladder
Slanting down a wall.
It looms in the before-dawn sweat,
Offered through the window as a covenant
That we survive each night;
That days float out of the stale darkness,
Busy with miracles.

II

We are married to each other's nights;
The sky a grey slice over a brush of trees.
It is Parmenides' world, the temptation of stone,
Where all lives are the same:
A dog whimpering is a heart, a butcher's rack is a hug,
A blind man is a mirror, a pistol is a gulp of blue wine.

III

My anxious lies will be discovered by archeologists
In the tenth layer, under burnt ships
And the broken bones of horses.
They will have the apologetic look of hearth-stones
Singed by the ordinary sadness of living.

That was before the virus of heroes had ruined our minds.
I grew up with no biography
As stones grow up, or the weather.
It was like fishing without a hook.

In the city of the tenth layer
The son had not ripped fire from his father's loins,
Wisdom was not a virgin born out of an ear,
The soldier did not stink from secret wounds,
The poet had not invented silence,
His wife had not yet learned to love death.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When the diggers came, they found burnt pots,
But the shadows had fled.
Instead of songs, a coprolith;
Instead of heaven, scratch marks on a wall,
The relic of bad dreams.

IV

I want to gnaw at my jailer's shadow.
I want to write to my brothers in crime
Whose victims get rich,
While they squat in stale rooms
Rolling snake-eyes with their heart-bones.
I want to sing of claustrophobia,
The iron marriage of a man to his shadow.

Hugging the sprawled sheets, the grease,
And the insomnia;
Inspecting the entrails of birds;
Speaking ghost-talk to my wife,
Although my anxiety shines through her
Without casting a shadow;

I will praise the fear of death
Which is the basalt of dark foundations;
I will trace a map for caravans setting out
Tomorrow across the blinding floor.
I will tell my secrets, listening in secret
To find them out.

V

I did not write these words; I scraped them into stone,
Like a prisoner loosening the bars with his bare hands.
My poem is an empty window, and a leap to freedom:
Softly blinking leaves, the horizon
Cupped suddenly under the sky.
It is a long fall as birds do it,
Shorter this way.

Paul Zweig

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard Gilman

BECKETT

By now there is a large body of criticism of Beckett's theater, some of it of a very high order: Jacques Guicharnaud's, Hugh Kenner's, Ruby Cohn's, among writings in English. But like that of the fiction this criticism often suffers from a scanting of the works' aesthetic reality, their mysterious functioning as drama, in favor of their being seen as closed philosophical utterances, histrionic forms of the vision Beckett had previously shaped into intense, arid tales, structures of intellectual despair placed on stage. Or else, if they are accepted as proper dramas, they are made local, particularized into anecdotes or fables of circumscribed and idiosyncratic conditions.

Thus an observer as acute and wrongheaded as Norman Mailer could detect the motif of impotence in *Waiting for Godot* but interpret it as sexual, delivering the play over to his own anxious concerns and so brutally shrinking its dimensions. In the same way an astute critic like the Yugoslavian scholar Darko Suvin can call Beckett's entire theater "relevant" only in "random and closed situations of human existence: in war, camps, prisons, sickness, old age, grim helplessness." Yet if these plays are not "relevant" to everything, coherent with human situations everywhere, then they are merely peripheral games of the imagination, grim and transient jests. But they are nothing of the kind.

Waiting for Godot was a commercial failure in the United States in 1956. Its critical reception was very much like that in France: bewilderment and distaste among the middlebrow re-

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a shortened version of a chapter from Richard Gilman's forthcoming book *The Making of Modern Drama.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

viewers, intense enthusiasm in avant-garde circles. Marya Mannes wrote a representative notice: "I doubt whether I have seen a worse play. I mention it only as typical of the self-delusion of which certain intellectuals are capable, embracing obscurity, pretense, ugliness and negation as protective coloring for their own confusions." Norman Mailer wrote two reviews for the newly founded *Village Voice*. The first was a scornful attack, the second, a week later, a grudging admission that the play had something after all. He added, however, that he still believed that "most of the present admirers of *Godot* are . . . snobs, intellectual snobs of undue ambition and impotent imagination, the worst sort of literary type, invariably more interested in being part of some intellectual elite than in the creative act itself."

This peculiar emphasis on what was considered to be the effeteness and self-deception of both Beckett and his admirers was characteristic at the time, and was only gradually moved to the fringes of cultural history as a die-hard position of know-nothingism when the years passed and Beckett's genius and his enormous influence on younger writers became evident to nearly everyone. The phenomenon of course resembles the various stages of reaction to Joyce and more broadly to modern art and literature in all their successive movements. In this case an idea of dramatic procedure was being violated; the theater, which was supposed to be an emotional matter, to present images of action, was being employed for inaction, and its tradition of completions and endings was being flouted by an almost intolerable irresolution. These things more than the play's ostensible "content," its melancholy view of human power and possibility, were what so disturbed conventional minds (or minds which like Mailer's had large areas of conventionality).

If *Waiting for Godot* is now widely accepted as the greatest dramatic achievement of the last generation, some would say the greatest imaginative work of any kind during the period, it is obviously because its once radically new form has with time been assimilated into educated consciousness, becoming at last a kind of norm itself. Diderot once wrote that "if one kind of art exists, it is difficult to have another kind," and Alain Robbe-Grillet has de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scribed the difficulty more precisely: "A new form always seems to be more or less an absence of any form at all, since it is unconsciously judged by reference to consecrated forms."

The new forms or dramatic methods that Beckett and others introduced in the early fifties found their own consecration in the collective designation "theater of the absurd"; along with Eugene Ionesco, whose work his in fact scarcely resembles, Beckett continues to be identified as one of that artificially created "movement's" chief practitioners. Dissimilar as their plays are, Beckett and Ionesco did however share a common ground in the abandonment of sequential action (their ancestors, though not their conscious influences, being Buechner and the early Brecht), their exclusion of almost everything that could be thought of as "plot," and their creation of a general atmosphere of illogic, of not "adding up." If anything, Ionesco's first plays satisfied more strictly than did Beckett's the dictionary definition of absurdity as being "that which is contrary to reason"; Beckett's dramas have always been closer to Camus's meaning in his description of the absurd as "that divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints."

This separation between desire and reality is in the largest sense what *Waiting for Godot* is about; it is a play of absence, a drama whose binding element is *what does not take place*. The fierce paradox of this provoked the search for the identity of the Godot of the title, as a way of uncovering the play's meaning, that became a minor critical industry in France and elsewhere. Richard Coe and others have found the source of the name in a well-known French racing cyclist, Godeau; Eric Bentley has pointed out the existence of an obscure play of Balzac's in which someone named Godeaux is expected throughout the evening but never arrives; and Roger Blin has said that Beckett told him the name comes from the French slang word for boot —— *godillot* —— and was chosen simply because of the importance in the play of boots and shoes as physical properties.

It has become clear that whever the origin of the name, Godot is not to be sought outside the boundaries of the play itself, just as he is not to be encountered within them. What the two tramps do encounter is his possibility; they are held to their places, their stripped, rudimentary existence on "a country road"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with its single tree, at evening, by the possibility that he will come to them or summon them to him, and their task, we might call it their raison d'etre, is just to wait. The play was originally called simply *Waiting,* and there is a significant clue in the final French title: en *attendant*, "*while* waiting." The drama is about what Vladimir and Estragon do while waiting for Godot, who does not come, whose very nature is that he doesn't come. He is a sought-for transcendency, that which is desired beyond our physical lives, so that these may have meaning.

But the meaning, the validation the tramps seek for their lives is never forthcoming; there is no transcendent being or realm from which human justification proceeds, or rather —— and this is the crucial difference between *Waiting for Godot* and so many modern works of despair —— we cannot be sure whether there is or not. In the space this doubt creates Didi and Gogo exist, neither "saved" nor "damned," unable to leave, which is to say unable not to exist, held there by an unbearable tension which it is their task —— or rather the play's task, the play as formal human invention —— to make bearable. Godot is not a figure for God or for immortality or, conversely, for the absence of these; he or it is a term within an imagined structure of life as we would feel or experience it if we were reduced, as Didi and Gogo are, to sheer, naked, noncontingent being, without theories, rationalizations, or abstract consolations of any kind.

For as Jacques Guicharnaud has said the figure of the tramp represents "man as such, as detached from society," and so from the mental and behavioral constructions by which social organization hides from us our real condition. Society is by nature optimistic, progressive (in the sense that it moves forward, develops new forms, believes that it improves), and self-sufficient. Man beyond (or beneath) society is pitched past such categories as optimism and pessimism, is existentially static (except that he moves physically toward death), and is radically insufficient. *Waiting for Godot* is a drama of man in such a state. It thus resembles in its themes and attitudes a number of plays of the modern past: *Peer Gynt,* with its motif of the destruction of the self through a belief in its sufficiency; *The Three Sisters,* with its static extension of lives that do not find culminations; *Baal,* with its protagonist placed beyond society's laws and claims.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But since the state with which all these plays from one perspective or another deal is itself an abstraction from the *real world,* since man only exists physically in society or by reference to it —— as in the case of a hermit or a shipwrecked person —— the dramatic imagination has to create, as a gesture toward reality and to fulfill the requirements of drama itself, some kind of social ground. That is to say, there has to be exchange, community of some sort, dialogue; in a paradox that is at the heart of the theater's art, the state of noncontingent existence, of pure being, together with the feeling of what it is like to be alive whatever the circumstances, is only rendered through contingencies and circumstances. Without these a play would be a philosophical disquisition, just as without the presence of at least two characters it would be a solipsistic exercise. In all Beckett's plays the necessity of there being more than one character is met in different ways: in *Krapp's Last Tape*, for example, the "other" is simply the one's recorded past self.

Didi's and Gogo's lifelikeness on the stage derives from their very unfreedom, or rather from their attitude toward it. To begin with they do not question it, since that would mean they could be something other than what they are —— the men who must wait. And in the face of this unfathomable compulsion to remain where they are they devise —— it is the exact word —— a provisional, tactical liberty, one of speech and small gestures. They are like prisoners free to amuse one another or to take advantage of the penitentiary's game room, the crucial difference being that for them the prison walls are as wide as the earth. No *idea* of existence itself being free afflicts or consoles them; and their wit and raillery, their wry or bitter utterance within this larger unfreedom, gives them their dignity, for if they do not rebel, neither do they quietly submit.

Held there then without a say in the matter, they must contrive to exist, not hopelessly but in a strange sort of indeterminacy in which hope is not an emotion or state of mind but an absence of proof that one ought to despair. And they must fill out this existence, which stretches from a vague historical beginning —— they speak of having been together perhaps fifty years, of having once been "respectable," and of having been "in the Macon

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

country" — to an unknown end, through their own resources, unaided and unjustified by anything outside themselves.

In this regard they are almost wholly theatrical, for in its essence theater is that which shows us life being fabricated, so to speak, from scratch; when an actor steps on to a stage he appears to have emerged as by spontaneous generation and he must live in this artificial environment by the inventions — the created words and gestures — of the playwright. What modern realism had done (and continues to do) however was to disguise behind a multiplicity of detail a surface of likeness to our ordinary lives, this radical nakedness and ab ovo quality of both theater and the life it is designed to illumine. One central strand of *Waiting for Godot*'s originality is its having recovered a lost principle of theater at the same time as it displays us to ourselves in our root condition.

It is the tramps' *presence* on the stage which, like ours on the earth, is at bottom unaccountable; as Robbe-Grillet has written, "they must explain themselves," defending their right to be there, although the plea is not offered to any judge or jury but to the void, which it helps to fill. Once again the connection between theater and life is intimate. The tramps are compelled to speak, are indeed, as Estragon says, "incapable of keeping silent," just as we are, since it is only through our words, those most abstract and insubstantial of our possessions, that we overcome — temporarily and with an illusory solace — our actorlike isolation and sense of arbitrary being.

And the truth they utter is not "about" anything external to themselves or even about their internal state; *Waiting for Godot* doesn't give information of the world or of the emotions or psyche but of what it is like to "be there," to have to be.

In doing this it offers no meanings in the traditional sense, an absence which is the source of its being designated absurd. Like Beckett's fiction, the play works tirelessly against just that desire for explicit meaning that has so often forced literature and the theater into a pedagogic function at odds with their aesthetic one. "I do not teach, I am a witness," Ionesco has said, a remark that applies with even more pertinence to Beckett and his tramps. For neither he nor they know why they are waiting or for whom ("If I had known who Godot is, I would have said," Beckett has told

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

us); all they know is that they do not know and that the hole their ignorance makes, Pascal's void felt at one's fingertips, must be filled in by words, the way space is filled by a juggler's balls or an acrobat's parabola.

Such analogies to the world of the circus and the music hall have often been made in regard to Beckett's theater, Hugh Kenner having gone so far as to locate the antecedents of his plays not in previous drama but in "Emmet Kelly's solemn determination to sweep a circle of light into a dustpan." The perception is shrewd but is a bit beyond the mark. For while the plays do indeed rise from the atmosphere and morale of circus rings and vaudeville stages, as well as from those of American silent-film comedy, their historic action is to have used those sources for a regeneration of theatrical art, whose elemental shapes and procedures were always firmly in Beckett's grasp. It was the desperate nonsense, the splendidly adroit accomplishment of insignificant acts (in a literal sense: without meaning or use) of trapeze artists, one-man bands, and people who stand on their index fingers —— or the equally grand failure on the part of clowns and stooges to attain the simplest physical results —— that Beckett borrowed in order to compose dramas of immediate presence as opposed to narrative unfoldings and of gratuitous being instead of portentous humanistic conviction.

These influences are much more directly physical than verbal in *Waiting for Godot:* the bowlers and baggy pants, the ill-fitting shoes and difficulties with laces, the carrots and turnips —— fundamental, inane foods eaten like haute cuisine —— the vaudeville routine of exchanging hats, the general impression of a succession of "turns" being done, unsequential, self-contained epiphanies of corporeal wisdom and folly. But the speech also emerges shaped and ordered like a program on an announcement board: now we say this, now we say that, we fill up the time. In actuality the circus is a place of pure physicality, as is of course the silent screen, and what Beckett has done, the essence of his innovating or renovating method, is to have thrown language, the chief bearer of our weighty significances, into a physical world of farcical gesture and knockabout comedy whose effect is to undermine all intellectual pretensions. One cannot speak "meaning-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fully" with a turnip in one's mouth and wearing shoes two sizes too big or too small.

In the same way that the "meaning" of the circus and of physical comedy is in their relation to the sober significances we attach to everything else in life, that of *Waiting for Godot* is in its relation to the values of logic, purposefulness, psychic or moral revelation, etc., we have been trained to expect from drama. Like the clown and the tap dancer, Didi and Gogo instruct us, by their improvisatory presence, in unseriousness, in a revivifying frivolity whose desperate edge is the result of a recognition that it is covering over an abyss. Their talk is not so much anti-intellectual as counterintellectual; in the course of the play they mock or demolish all our myths of meaning, using language against itself so as to prevent it from disguising their radical vulnerability. After an absurdly grave exchange about radishes, Didi says, "This is becoming really insignificant," to which Gogo replies, "Not enough."

This process of what we might call a decantation of meaning is continuous in the play, which takes up themes of many kinds —— religious, philosophical, psychological —— without allowing any of them to become the drama's motif, and with a fierce comic opposition to their pretensions. "We have kept our appointment and that's an end to that," Didi orates at one point. "We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?" Gogo's wonderfully deflating reply is "Billions." In another exchange Didi asserts, "We are happy," words which Gogo mechanically repeats before asking, "What do we do now, now that we are happy?" Didi's answer is a pressure back to the naked ground of their existence, beneath emotions, psychic particularities, or humanist values: "Wait for Godot."

Beyond this, language and gesture are in a wholly ambiguous causal relationship. In another break with dramatic tradition, speech does not predict gesture or gesture speech. Instead of instigating physical actions or articulating their relevances, language now operates to ignore, question, or annul them. The most striking examples of this are the last lines of both acts —— "Yes, let's go" —— which are followed in the text by the words "They do not move" and on the stage by the tramps' remaining immobile. There is no explanation of the failure to stir, only the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

presence of the gap. In this way the orderly universe of utterance followed by logically related movement, of volition succeeded by steps taken, which we inhabit as our very air, is disrupted, pulled asunder. And in the spaces this leaves we feel comically and harrowingly deprived of support, for here language, instead of controlling or shaping the world, has established its own wayward dominion.

Pozzo and Lucky. These two are emissaries from the realm of time and from the life of society, with its institutionalized relationships, its comforts and delusions, above all its thirst for hierarchies. Didi and Gogo live in an atmosphere in which time barely moves forward and in which all values are flattened out under the arc of Godot's possibility, the value whose absence empties all judgments. Here one thing is as important or as unimportant as any other —— a carrot or a memory, a shoe or love —— and here nothing has power over anything else. In Pozzo and Lucky on the contrary are embodied the very principles of human power and exploitation, delusory, ultimately disastrous, but maintained by them as the foundation of their lives.

They are thus a contrast to the tramps' perpetually self-invented, powerless beings, which hunger for a net under the void in whose air they dance, like cartoon characters arrested in mid-fall from a cliff. For Pozzo and Lucky are creatures of the society from which Didi and Gogo have been extricated in order that they may wait, without histories or plans, for validation. Agents of "reality," these intruders have been shaped by its exigencies and values, which divert us from our condition of helplessness, and by time, which blinds us to our fateful, deep lack of change. Unexpected signs of Beckett's genius, their presence in the play helps, along with the brogans and radishes, to preserve it from an overbouyancy, a lightness arising from its deprivation of the ordinary materials and weights of "realistic" drama. They are reminders of the actuality the imagination has to leave behind.

In the way Godot's identity has been sought for and worried over, those of Pozzo and Lucky have been traced to numerous objective sources. Bertolt Brecht is said to have been planning at his death a socialist version of the play in which Pozzo would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

incarnate capitalist exploitation and Lucky proletarian subjection. More broadly Lucky's relationship to Pozzo has been taken to be that of intellect enslaved by materialism, and the former's presence with a rope around his neck (the mind at the end of its tether) and his famous speech —— a broken, mad onrush of scraps of theology, philosophy, and scientific information —— does suggest some such structure. But there is a danger in this kind of interpretative pursuit. *Waiting for Godot* is no allegory but a marvelously concrete work to which we are asked to lend our sense, our unrationalized affective capacities as spectators; the social or political relevance may or may not follow.

The difficulty is of course that we are used to experiencing in drama emotions we have felt in life, enhanced and given formal structure on the stage, and that these emotions are always attached to narrative situations, however brief or self-contained. We live by telling ourselves tales out of the materials of our experience or reveries: stories of love, hatred, moral or physical triumph or disaster, anecdotes of happiness or regret, all with progressive movements and outcomes, endings. But there is no recognizable story in *Waiting for Godot* and hence no development, no suspensefulness (except that of whether or not Godot will come; but to respond to the play at all is to understand at once that he will not), and no denouement, the very principles of dramatic interest, as we have been taught.

Moreover, the emotions that are thus offered in suspension, as it were, are continually balked, stifled, canceled out. Whenever a character appears to be feeling some definite emotion or to have entered some decisive area of commitment, it is all undone, by an opposing remark, a corrosive scornfulness, a physical jape. This process of undoing is also one of the chief functions of Beckett's famous pauses and silences, intervals of emptiness which resemble those in Chekhov and which in both playwrights serve as agencies of negation or ironic undermining. In one sequence Gogo asks "if we're tied." "To Godot?" Didi replies. "Tied to Godot? What an idea! No question of it. (Pause.) For the moment." Into the pause rushes our own awareness that there is every question of it, and Didi's subsequent "for the moment" simply adds a further irony to the exchange.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The result of all this is that we find it difficult to "identify" with the tramps, and this will be true as long as we wish them to be traditional protagonists carrying forward an active narrative full of recognizable events to a point of resolution and summing-up. We have to see them as figures provisionally outside time and cumulative circumstances, placed on stage in order to show us what being on earth, beneath social fate and personal distinctiveness, is like. As Buechner made Woyzeck into an embodiment of pure oppressed creatureliness, the victim as hero, Strindberg split his characters into faculties and impulses, and Chekhov kept his three sisters immobile so that their truthfulness as survivors might be seen —— all blows at dramatic rules and rubrics —— so Beckett, in the most far-reaching revolution of all, deprives his characters of a story and an ending in order to demonstrate how we wait for these things, how the waiting is our bitter, comic task.

Yet the demonstration is no abstract exercise but a form of invented life, and this life at the extremity moves us deeply in ways we could not have foreseen. We have not had these emotions, for we have not knowingly lived this existence; but we recognize it now. There are moments in the play of great poignancy —— it is the wrong word, but this is Beckett, in which no word is ever quite "right" —— when we fully intuit the mysterious, unexampled humanity of the entire work and are moved to tears through our laughter. Perhaps the deepest of these occasions is when the boy appears at the end of each act with word that Godot will not come "today." "What am I to tell Mr. Godot, Sir?" he asks them once. Didi's reply contains the essence of the longing, the uncertainty and painfulness of this clown show, this juggling act in stricken space: "Tell him . . . (he hesitates) . . . tell him you saw us."

If such categories as optimism and pessimism pertain at all to Beckett, then *Endgame* is much more pessimistic than *Waiting for Godot.* In its seedy room whose windows look out on empty ocean, the living world seems to have been narrowed down to four survivors: Hamm, who cannot see or stand; Clov, his servant, who cannot sit; and Nagg and Nell, his parents, who exist throughout in ash cans. Everything is winding down to a finish, as in that ultimate phase of a chess match which gives the play its title.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Humanly, it is dissolution rather than explicit death that seems to be in the offing. There are no more coffins, we are told; death as a rite, and therefore as connection to human truth, has been abrogated.

In this burnt-out world, which has been compared to that of Lear at the end of his drama but perhaps more closely resembles that of Woyzeck, despair is an axiom. When at one point Clov tells Hamm that his father is weeping down in his ash can, Hamm replies, "Then he's living." He then asks Clov, "Did you ever have an instant of happiness?" to which the response is, "Not to my knowledge." "You're on earth," Hamm tells him, "there's no cure for that." Only Clov seems to have any desire or capacity for a change of circumstances; he grumbles or protests bitterly throughout at his subjection to Hamm, and in fact seems in the end to have made good his repeated threats to leave, as though from a doomed house.

It is tempting to see in all this a parable of man at the end of his rope, more specifically postatomic man, and the play has indeed been staged along the lines of a vision of the world after nuclear holocaust, as well as, from a different but equally "contemporary" perspective, along Freudian and Marxist ones. But this is in a peculiar way to take the play too seriously, to give it a weight of commentary and social earnestness its imaginative structure continually subverts. We ought to know from Beckett's entire body of work that of all living writers he is the least interested in the present, in the changes time effects and in what we might call local, temporally, or spatially differentiated existence. His imagination functions almost entirely outside history: what is, has been, and what has been, will be, so that writing for him is the struggle to find new means to express this proposition of stasis. In this struggle is one source of the tension of his work.

Another related source is in the unending dialectic between what he is "expressing" on an immediate level in the words and gestures, and his obsession with the literary and dramatic impulses in themselves, the human need to say and show. This is his truest subject: the illusion that our speech and movements make a *difference,* the knowledge that this is an illusion, and the tragi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

comic making of speech and gestures in the face of the knowledge. The materials may vary, like those of an orator on different occasions, but they remain those of a voice engaging in utterance precisely for its own sake, for the sake, that is, of meeting the obligation of making human presence known.

Such materials do not add up to a reassembling of the phenomenal world such as we ordinarily expect from literature and drama, nor do they constitute a commentary on the present state of personality or society. "He is not writing about something, he is writing something," Beckett once said of Joyce, and it is even truer of himself. What he is writing —— bringing into being ——in *Endgame* is another version of his ur-text on the human self caught between actuality and desire, the craving for justification and its objective absence; at the same time it is a drama to show the impulse of playing —— by which we fill in the void —— to show it up. If it is more desperate than its predecessor, this isn't because Beckett has seen the world grow grimmer or has less hope than before (he had never had any), but because he has pushed the undertaking of artifice closer to the edge, cut down the number of possible ways out. There is not even a Godot now to provide by his felt absence a prospect of a future.

From the opening "tableau," as the stage directions call it, with Hamm sitting covered with a sheet like a piece of furniture in storage, Clov standing "motionless by the door, his eyes fixed on him," and the ash cans adding their silly, mysterious presence, the play proceeds to unfold as though it were the partly self-mocking work of a weary company of barnstormers who have set up their portable stage in some provincial town and laid out their shabby scenery and props. The text they speak has a "content" of desolation and end-of-the-world malaise, but it is interspersed with literary ironies and internal theatrical references and jokes, all of which go to sustain the thesis, most brilliantly propounded by Hugh Kenner, that *Endgame* is a play about playing, a performance about performing.

"What is there to keep me here?" Clov asks at one point, to which Hamm (ham actor? the reading is now a commonplace) replies, "The dialogue." "What about having a good guffaw the two of us together?" Hamm says. Clov (after reflection): "I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

couldn't guffaw again today." Hamm (after reflection): "Nor I." "Let's stop playing!" Clov pleads near the end; Hamm calls one remark of his an "aside" and says that he's "warming up for my last soliloquy"; Clov says of his departure at the end that "this is what we call making an exit." It is all theatrical, rehearsed, in a deeply important sense *perfunctory*; the scene is not one of despair in a darkening world as much as a weary, self-conscious enactment of what such a scene is supposed to be like, of what it would be like *in literature*.

Endgame's thoroughgoing artificiality as tragedy, its self-derision —— in his opening speech Hamm says, "Can there be misery —— (he *yawns*) —— loftier than mine?" —— point directly to its imaginative purpose. As in all of Beckett's work what is being placed on sorrowfully mocking exhibition is not the state of the world or of inner life as any philosopher or sociologist or psychiatrist could apprehend it (or as we ourselves could in our amateur practice of those roles), but the very myths of meaning, the legends of significance that go into the making of humanistic culture, providing us with a sense of purpose and validity separated by the thinnest wall from the terror of the void.

It is not that Beckett doesn't experience this emptiness —— no living writer feels it more —— but that he is more pertinently obsessed, as an artist, with the self-dramatizing means we take to fill it. The mockery that fills his first plays is a function of his awareness of this activity, not a repudiation of it; we can't do otherwise, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* are saying, we fill the time with our comic or lugubrious or tragic dramas. Still, we have to know that they are inventions, made up in the midst of indifferent nature —— stone, tree, river, muskrat, wasp —— all that has no question to ask and no "role" to take on.

Thus the derision does not deny the horror, nor the stress on artifice annul the real. But palpable actuality isn't Beckett's subject, which is, as has been said, the relationship between actuality and our need to express it, to *express ourselves*. Such expression is always "artificial," always self-conscious (since it is consciousness of being conscious that we are impelled by) and never directly "true." "Matter has no inward," Coleridge once wrote, and it is this truth that we are trapped in, material beings who crave

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inwardness and have the capacity to imagine it. At its most formal level the expression of our inwardness becomes literature, drama, which, as Ibsen beautifully described it in *The Master Builder*, make up "castles in the air."

What *Endgame* demonstrates is how our self-dramatizing impulses, our need for building Ibsen's castles, is inseparable from the content of our experiences, how we do not in fact know our experience except in literary or histrionic terms. And this is independent of whether the experience is solemn or antic, exalted or base. We give it reality and dignity by expressing it, we validate it by finding, or rather hopelessly seeking, the "right" words and forms. This is what is going on in *Endgame* beneath the lugubriousness and anomie: "Something is taking its course," Clov says; not their lives —— they are actors, they have no "lives" —— but their filling in of the emptiness with their drama.

"By his stress on the actors as professional men and so on the play as an occasion in which they operate," as Kenner has written, Beckett turns the piece from a report, however fantastic, on the state of the world to an image of the world being dramatized. In this performance the actor is not an interpreter or incarnation of surrogate emotion for the audience but simply the professional embodiment of an activity we all engage in, at every moment, to build the wall against silence and nonbeing. "Outside of here it's death," Hamm says, and what he means is not that death is closing in but that *inside*, in this stage-as-room and room-as-stage, the play goes forward to enact the human answer to it, the absurd, futile, nobly unyielding artifice of our self-expression.

If the true action and subject of the play are therefore the enactment of despair rather than despair itself, then the relationships of the characters to one another have to be seen in an untraditional light. Like Pozzo and Lucky, Hamm and Clov have been thought of as impotent master and sullenly rebellious servant (capitalism and the working class? imperialism and emerging nations?) or, more subtly, as paradigmatic of every human relation of exploitation and tyranny. But once again this is to take their connection too literally, at its verbal surface. We ought to remember that Beckett is not interested in human relations as such but in human ontology, in the status of the stripped, isolated self

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

beneath social elaboration. It is the requirement of the stage that there be at least duality, tension demanding otherness, that turns his plays away from the nearly solipsistic interior monologues of his novels.

Yet something is carried over from the fiction to the drama, and it is a central clue to Beckett's new dramaturgy. If Hamm and Clov do not represent or incarnate any types discoverable in the social world, they are not even discrete personalities, except as they possess a sort of provisional and tactical individuation as a source of dialogue and therefore of dramatic propulsion. For many things about the play suggest that there is really only one consciousness or locus of being in the room, a consciousness akin to that of the "narrator" of the novels, so that it is more than plausible to take the room or stage as the chamber of the mind and the figures in it as the mind's inventions, the cast of characters of its theater. This is almost irresistably indicated by a passage in one of Hamm's soliloquies: "Then babble, babble, words, like the solitary child who turns himself into children, two, three, so as to be together and whisper together, in the dark."

Clov would then be an extension of Hamm, the seated, reigning, perhaps dreaming figure. Hamm has invented a servant to be his eyes and agent of mobility, as we speak of our senses and legs serving us, and he has reinvented his parents, turning them into his own grotesque children. He is now complete, the play can be staged, the desparate drama in the dark. And Beckett's play *Endgame* takes on still another implication: that it is an illusion that there are fellow actors in our dramas; we have to invent them as they invent us; we are all children in the dark, solitary, babbling, inconsolable. But we play, in this case the *end game*, the last phase of an abstract life worked out in the mind.

Since *Endgame* Beckett's plays have become shorter and emptier of what we think of as dramatic action. But in direct relation to this they have become technically even more astonishing. Like the fiction, where the superficially diverse and active cast of characters of *More Pricks than Kicks* dwindles down to the solitary crawler in the mud of *How It Is*, the plays have followed a more or less steady course toward the elimination of everything

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

extraneous. But how is that decided? What is essential? In both the novels and the plays it is as though Beckett has attempted with increasingly narrow fervor to make the obligation to express function with the absolute minimum of support from the traditional materials of fiction and drama. The result is that he would seem to have reached the taut, dry, naked spirit of literature and theater themselves.

In this his later dramatic work is the textural equivalent of, as well as almost surely one inspiration for, the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski's "poor theater," a theater stripped of nearly every conventional physical means of seduction and allure. In both cases the motive (although much less conscious and deliberate on Beckett's part) is to purify the stage of its contamination by the obvious, by "lifelikeness," which leads to surrogate, reflected experience instead of the new and autonomous. It is to make the theater yield dry, linear gestures rather than expansive ones, to allow what we might call its metaphysical raison d'etre —— its purpose as the enactment of presence —— to detach itself from the banality of the merely sensational.

Happy Days is Beckett's most savagely ironic play, if one can speak of so detached a literary principle as irony operating at the level of intense vision he attains here. A tour de force for an actress, it is doubtless the most difficult of his theater works to do well, for no other of them combines such fierce precision of mise-en-scene, such exactly calibrated movement and speech, with so full a complement of what we think of homely sentiment and even sentimentality. It is in just this relationship of the play's commonplace emotional substance to the counterweight of its grotesque physical schema and unrelenting procedures that, as in similar kinds of antinomies in Beckett, the play's fascination lies.

Winnie, the woman buried up to her waist in sand in the first act and to her neck in the second, is a victim of time in an even more explicit and so more theatrically visible way than Beckett's earlier characters. His obsession with the Greek story of Zeno and the heap of millet is well known, and from this he no doubt derived the central physical situation. Once again it is time piling up around you, not carrying you to a destination but burying you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where you are. This shift in metaphor from the traditional one of time as a current to that of an inert substance is crucial in all of Beckett, but nowhere has it been made more palpable. Winnie is *in* time, the phrase we use so lightly; imprisoned there, she lives with decreasing mobility, being able at first to move her head and arms and later only her head. The implication is that were the play to go on the sands would finally cover her up, like an object in the desert.

More than this, she lives without past or future, since these imply continuity, extension. When Beckett directed the play in Germany in 1971, Ruby Cohn tells us, his *regiebuch* ("production book") contained a note that the script's broken speech and action should be related to the discontinuity of time, the fact that for Winnie time is experienced as "an incomprehensible transport from one inextricable present to the next." He also told the actress who played Winnie that the bag, from which she takes the objects — toothbrush, comb, lipstick, etc. — that are the basis for almost all of the physical action, was her "friend," while the bell which sounds at the beginning and end of each "day" was her "enemy."

In his essay on Proust, Beckett wrote that "habit is a compromise effected between the individual and his environment, or between the individual and his own organic eccentricities, the guarantee of a dull inviolability, the lightning conductor of his existence." And he went on to quote Proust's remark that "habit is a second nature," keeping "us in ignorance of the first" and being "free of its cruelties and enchantments."

It is habit, then, that makes Winnie's existence in the sand acceptable to her, as it makes life bearable for us all, at the expense of cruelties and enchantments. This is the human truth of the play, the burden of its insight. Dramatically, the utter lack of awareness on Winnie's part that there is anything frightful or even untoward in her situation is exemplary of one of the most profoundly original aspects of Beckett's art. Neither Winnie nor any of his other characters ever give an indication of being in anything but the most unremarkable set of circumstances; the effect is to give the fantastic a "natural" quality, to eliminate the usual distance between the grotesque and the normal, and so to reveal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the quotidian and commonplace as the unknowing harborers of realities beyond the actual.

The presence of Willie, the man who has been behind her mound throughout, has led to various sociological interpretations of *Happy Days*, the most extreme and vigorously argued being that of Albert Bermel, who sees the play as a study of a dead marriage. There is a certain thin plausibility to this but it is quickly exhausted in the light of Beckett's whole body of work and that of the play's internal evidence. Willie and Winnie may indeed be husband and wife but marriage is scarcely the play's subject. If it were, why should almost all the dramaturgical energy be expended on Winnie, and what are we to make of the mound of sand, the bell, the blazing light? Are they symbols of domestic routine and marital moribundity? Beckett is hardly the writer to provide us with such triteness.

Kenneth Tynan made the same kind of reductive error when he interpreted Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* as a satire on English suburban life instead of seeing it as a play about the nature of language. In the case of *Happy Days* Willie is there to be the *other,* to keep Winnie from solipsism and so keep the play from becoming an anecdote of isolation or loneliness, and also to provide by his marginally greater mobility a perspective on her own immurement. Neither Tynan nor Bermel can imagine a play without an "objective" subject, a theme transcribable into social or psychic data. But Beckett has always functioned at a level much beyond that; his effort has been to reconstitute human life as dramatic or literary artifact, not to offer an account of it as though he were simply a gifted savant.

Since *Happy Days,* written in 1961, Beckett has produced very little for the theater, although he has done a few short pieces for radio and television and a film script for Buster Keaton called, simply, *Film*. The most impressive stage work during these years has been *Play,* which appeared in 1964. These generic titles are indications of how closely his attention had become fixed on the natures of the mediums, on the way the forms function beneath their ostensible contents. A piece that runs no more than seventeen or eighteen minutes —— although the script calls for it to be repeated without a break —— *Play* is a work in which dramatic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

action has been reduced to an absolute minimum, or rather one in which such action has undergone another change of definition.

The direction of his theater had been toward decreasing movement, with Winnie's incarceration the culminating point until *Play*. Here the "characters" are two nameless women and a man, whose heads protruding from urns are the only parts we see and whose speech, together with the movements of a spotlight that shifts in a strictly arranged choreography from one speaker to another, make up the work's entire scheme of action. They presumably are dead, which is to say past all possibility of change; immured in time, now wholly arrested, they can only rehearse certain events and recognitions of their lives, the central experience being an adulterous affair which the man had had with one of the women (the other is his wife), repeating the frozen "drama" again and again.

"What a curse, mobility!" Winnie exclaims in *Happy Days* and the words are more than simply another of the play's ironies. For mobility is that which defines creaturely life but it is also the agency of human illusions, for illusion rests on the capacity to imagine *something not present* and so implies movement, change. This is especially true in literature, our formalization of illusion, for there the freedom to move, from one abstract place or time to another and so from one condition to a new one, is absolute. All fiction and drama, no matter what their content may be, supply us with the illusion, in Beckett's terms, of difference, change through movement.

And so his perhaps doomed effort has been to make literature and drama out of as little of such mobility as possible, in order to force the mind to attend to unchanging —— unmoving —— realities. From the passivity of Belacqua in his first stories to the incher through the slime of *How It Is* his fiction has reduced the area in which his creatures can move, so that it might be seen what it means to be in the human condition, to know oneself at the metaphysical —— beyond the corporeal —— heart of things. The plays have proceeded in much the same way. An impossibility, this presenting of significances or perceptions detached from our recognizable days and hours, our progress through sensate life . . . but that is the paradox of his art.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The "story" the three voices tell in *Play* is of desire, jealousy, egoism, disgust, in some ways a conventional narrative of sexual entanglement. But it is not this tale that matters nearly so much as the manner of its telling, more precisely the terrifying inability of these "dead" souls to keep from speaking. The material is not a matter of indifference; if they were talking about a croquet game or a memorable meal they had shared, we would feel a discrepancy between such a subject and their present condition, an excessive quality to their fate. As it is, the moral and emotional substance has an almost classic gravity which is balanced by the despairing need to go on giving it expression.

And it is this need to express themselves, to account for their passion and torment, in short *to be actors,* that constitutes the damnation, if we want to call it that, of the three. In the stage directions Beckett refers to them as "victims" and to the spotlight darting from one to another as an "inquisitor." Once again he is placing the theatrical at the forefront of his theater: a spotlight, instrument of publicity, conjuror of presence, coercer of the expressible. It holds them in this rehearsal of what their lives came to, of what life comes to. Beyond morality or emotions, beyond memory even, is speech, words with their traces of our truth, whose body lies elsewhere. "Is it that I do not tell the truth," one of the women says, "is that it, that some day somehow I may tell the truth at last, and then no more light at last, for the truth?"

Voices, ghostly faces, in the light still. The theater in Beckett's hands has abandoned events, direct clashes, inquiries, representations. What remains is the theatrical impulse itself, this thrust toward the truth about our condition: that it consists in enactment, presence, the painful necessity to remain visible. "Tell him you saw us," Didi says to Godot's messenger. To be seen, heard, by a Godot, by each other and, in the darkness, ourselves: this is an obligation, a fate, and, finally, a story.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anne Fabre-Luce

PARIS LETTER

Whether one likes it or not, the literary crop this fall doesn't promise to be particularly brilliant. Of the ninety-three novels which came out in September, a large number aren't worth mentioning. But one should take note of Ionesco, who makes an attempt at the novel with *Le Solitaire* (Mercure de France), in which he describes the hell of the everyday; this pursuit of paradise lost, this waiting for I don't know what redemptive grace, has already been expressed in a far more convincing manner in his plays than it is in these reflections at once morbid and a trifle smug. There is also talk of the "maturity" achieved by Suzanne Prou in her latest novel, *La Terrasse des Bernardini* (Calmann–Lévy); I myself find the achievement highly relative. Monique Wittig's *Le Corps Lesbien* (Minuit) may be the most interesting book of the lot; it is an incantation, addressed to the female body on the level of physiology as well as that of eroticism, a series of lyrical emblems which breathlessly recount the epic of woman.

Among the new first novels, one notes a considerable number by women authors: Florence Delay's *Minuit sur les Jeux*, for example (which is being pushed by Gallimard for the Prix Goncourt, I hear); and —— also from Gallimard —— *Ici Commence*, by Natacha Michel; Marie-Josèphe Gautier's *Les Armes du Rêve*, and Elizabeth Huppert's *La Terrasse*. All of these books are largely autobiographical; they recount various childhoods and sentimental educations, startling to one degree or another. There are undeniable literary gifts in evidence at times —— particularly in the case of Florence Delay —— but none of these novels could be regarded as signifying the appearance of a greater writer.

Personally, I prefer Henri Raczymow's *La Saisie* (Gallimard), which is the account of a bank employee who finds himself in his apartment after it has been emptied out by sheriff's officers. Alone with his own speech, the narrator embarks on a kind of autoanalysis in which deli-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rium, scrupulous truthfulness, and fabulation mingle. This book is like a pretext for an original investigation into the possibility of writing itself. Working from a similar perspective, *Les Premiers Mots* (Flammarion) by Bernard Noël, whose remarkable *Château de Cène* had been banned by the censors (one doesn't really know why), demands consideration as the creation of an original author in much the same way that *La Saisie* does: both works set up a kind of a subtle static interfering with the notion of the subject, and so move beyond the psychological novel. Such efforts have already been advanced to a considerable degree elsewhere, by authors like Maurice Roche (whose forthcoming novel, *Codex*, is now being awaited) and Roger Laporte.

On the whole the crop of theoretical works seems much richer and more engaging: indeed, originality and power of thought seem to be concentrated in the magazines, which are flourishing. But perhaps this shift of ground requires a bit of explanation: for a number of years now, beyond the limits of the traditional novel (which continues to be written), and also beyond those efforts made by certain writers in the direction of an analysis of "textuality" as a specific dimension of the practice of writing, certain philosophers and contemporary thinkers have thrown into question the coherence of the subject —— "its complete metaphysical presence in itself," to use Derrida's phrase. The subversive "readings" undertaken by this latter writer, as well as by Pautrat (in his *Nietzsche ou les versions du soleil*, published by Seuil), tend to bring to light the "latencies" of the text, as Althusser has done in the case of Marx. This highly conceptual form of critical thought is both more and less than a philosophy, in that it shifts the ground of discourse and consequently that of the subject within it. These works seem to me to compensate very well for the exhaustion of the novel, at the same time as they explain and justify it. Writing in the first person is becoming a more and more hazardous undertaking, threatened from within and forced to recognize its mystifying and mythifying aspects by the combined pressure of ideology and the unconscious.

But it should be said at the outset that no contemporary philosopher, whether it be Foucault, Derrida, Althusser, or J. F. Lyotard, has proposed a system, properly speaking. Ever since the ascendance of phenomenology the idea of a system has quite disappeared from philosophical thought. Detailed description and criticism which subverts discourse through discourse itself —— these have taken the place of those vast and reassuring conceptual wholes of which Bergson's work was undoubtedly the last example in France. Like literature —— but having advanced to some extent beyond it —— philosophy today is engaged in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

questioning its own operation; and psychoanalysis and linguistics are the privileged instruments for this questioning of discourse on both the level of the formation of ideas and that of the thinking to which those ideas give rise. It is for this reason that the real ground of contemporary thought has so obviously expanded on the level of the *essay*, which combines theory with concrete critical observations.

Most critical and philosophical studies at the moment show the strong influence of psychoanalysis as a means of coming to know the subject and his speech. In Paris there are four groups which are distinguishable from one another according to the position which each adopts toward the teaching of psychoanalysis. The most orthodox of these groups is the Société Psychanalytique de Paris, which is connected with the international association: hence its attendance last July at the Congrès de Paris, in the course of which the relationship between the analyst and the society was thrown into question, as was the scientific status of this "art."

From the point of view of training, the Société Psychanalytique de Paris is particularly strict: the program of courses here is compulsory, as are the controls placed on future analysts. Theoretical research is not required. Some members of this society have set up a pilot project in the Thirteenth Arrondissement under the direction of Drs. Diatkine and Leibovici. Psychotherapy and analytic investigation are carried on there in the schools; it's a form of preventive hygiene against mental illness. This kind of practice is oriented very much along the lines of what might be called "orthopedagogy."

The second group, which split off from the first around 1950, is led by J. Laplanche and B. Pontalis, authors of the well-known *Dictionnaire de la Psychanalyse*. Their disagreement with the first group centered on the problem of analytic knowledge. They publish an excellent journal, *La Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* (Gallimard), the latest issue of which (Number 7), on "Bisexuality and the Difference between the Sexes," opens up the enormous problem of sexual ambivalence by denouncing the suppression to which it has in effect been subjected since Freud. The first group publishes *Etudes Freudiennes*, under the direction of Conrad Stein.

But the two most divergent groups are the third and fourth. The third is that of the Ecole Freudienne de Paris, and it is led by Jacques Lacan, who has just begun publishing his celebrated seminars with *Livre XI* (Seuil), which is concerned with what he regards as the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis: the unconscious, repetition, drives, and transference. This group publishes *Scilicet*, a collective effort signed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Lacan alone. The hierarchy within this group is very much oriented toward research. Containing "member analysts," "practicing member analysts," and "ordinary members," it is a veritable college of analysts, of whom the most well known are Serge Leclaire (*Psychanalyser, Dêmasquer le Rêel,* published by Seuil), Clavereul, Mme Pankow, etc.

As for the fourth group, it broke with Lacan in 1969, under the leadership of Mme Piera Aulagnier, over the question of "controls" (*contrôles*), which Lacan rather curiously calls "permits" (*passes*). The thought and practice of this group maintain their allegiance to Lacan (see, for example, Mme Aulagnier's extraordinary study of female sexuality in *Dêsir et Perversion*, published by Seuil). The emphasis is placed on the problem of language ("I *speak* there where I *am* not"), on the barrier separating the signifier from what is signified, on the metonymical and metaphorical axes of discourse, on the question of desire and lack. This group also publishes a journal, called *Topiques*.

There is a fifth group to be mentioned, too, one which also grew originally out of the school of Lacan. Called "le Labo," it is directed by Anne-Lise Cohen, who is a Maoist. It represents the "red base" of psychoanalysis, but at last word its activity was in the process of disappearing.

It is in direct opposition to this unusually rich field of possibilities for psychoanalytic inquiry that one must place Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and their book *Capitalisme et Schizophrênie: L'Anti-Oedipe* (Minuit). In this hefty volume —— which has sold as quickly and as well as a "naughty" novel, and which comes down like a veritable bombshell in the field of theory —— the authors engage in a violent attack on Freud (as they also do in the latest issue —— Number 5 —— of the excellent review called *Minuit*, in which they present their critique of Freud's interpretation of "The Wolf-Man"): they dispute his Oedipal theory and his account of the different areas of the psyche. For them, the unconscious is not a theater but a factory, a place and an instrument of production; it is neither structural (as in Lacan), nor figurative (Freud), but machinelike, and —— most importantly —— it exists in direct relation to the society, whether capitalist or not. Viewed in this perspective, the Oedipal conception seems a long-time error which saps the productive forces of the unconscious and imprisons the analyst and the analysand in the Papa-Mama-Child circuit —— that is, in "familyism." What Deleuze and Guattari propose is a "schizoanalysis" which recognizes the fundamental link uniting the living production of the "desiring machine" with the body politic. The concept of representation must be replaced by that of production (which is precisely what Jean Ricardou attempts in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

analysis of literary texts). Schizoanalysis wipes out the Oedipal conception, the illusion of the ego, the phantasm of the superego, guilt, law, and castration. In this truly materialistic theory, desire *produces reality* —— not a gap, an essential lack, as in Lacan.

We need only take note in closing of issue Number 55 of *Tel Quel*, from which Denis Roche has just dissociated himself with a great to-do, following the Artaud-Bataille conference at Cerisy-la-Salle. Sollers's observations "Sur le Matérialisme" in this issue should be read (the book is to come out in December, published by Seuil), as well as a remarkable essay by Jean-Louis Baudry (who is on the editorial board) on Bataille's *expérience intérieure*, which he demystifies completely; and there is also a short sequence taken from Maurice Roche's next book, "Cou(l)pe."

But parallel to the ebb and flow of ideas agitating the French intelligentsia, some weightier concerns have been revealing themselves: indignation in response to the military putsch in Chile; bad conscience in the face of acts inspired by anti-Arab racism (how is one to deal with the withdrawal of immigrant Algerian workers?); anxiety produced by the growing inflation of the franc (the bank discount rate is now up to 11½ percent). For the optimists, however, *tout va bien*, since the new Montparnasse Tower has just opened its eighty stores and its height (720 feet) constitutes a new peak in the Parisian sky: a peak which obstructs the view of the Ecole Militaire, to be sure, but which still hallows the expansionist vistas of the Pompidou regime . . .

(Translated from the French by Stephen Donadio)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GOING TO THE MOVIES

Jonathan Baumbach

THE HOUSE THAT LOSEY BUILT

In 1954, not having worked in two years as a consequence of the Hollywood blacklist, Joseph Losey directed his first English film, a sleazy, semicoherent project called *The Sleeping Tiger.* The narrative purports to be about a psychiatrist (Alexander Knox) who installs a young hoodlum (Dirk Bogarde) in his house in order to discover, in the cold-eyed interests of science, what makes Bogarde erupt into violence. The discovery is made and a cure effected —— a dazzlingly primitive notion of psychoanalysis informs the movie —— though not before Bogarde has had an affair with the doctor's repressed wife (Alexis Smith), awakening the destructive thrall of the lady's own sleeping tiger. We also have some indication that a third sleeping tiger resides in the doctor himself. The narrative of course is a disguise. The film is essentially about an older man, willfully oblivious of his motives, who brings a young man into his house to make love to his wife. What we get, though displaced into something else, is a film dealing with vicarious identification, a love story between surrogate father and surrogate son brought to grief by the woman, who is the outsider and enemy.

As I hope the above synopsis suggests, the same obsessions that inform *Accident* and, in fact, all of Losey's more notable films are present, and interestingly so, in a project as bizarre and apparently hopeless as *The Sleeping Tiger.* Losey's films, apart from visual signature and no matter how disparate the occasion one from another, have a profound similarity of concern. It has been an uneven and unpredictable career, admirable on a number

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of accounts, and not without some extraordinary disasters. Only a director of some importance could have made a film as monumentally bad as *Boom*. There are several fine Losey films made in England before *The Servant,* the first of the Pinter collaborations, that are still virtually unknown in this country. I am referring in particular to *Second Chance* (*Blind Date* in England), *The Concrete Jungle,* and *Time Without Pity,* highly distinctive and subtle movies made out of implausible melodramatic projects.

On the surface Losey's film career, beginning with *The Boy with Green Hair* (1948), seems a pilgrimage from social consciousness to aestheticism. And yet it is not an opportunistic career in the vulgar sense, and it is clearly not interested in fashion. And of course the two sides of Losey are present in all his work: there are elegances in the American period and tendentiousness in the English films. Lately, we have two curious projects from Losey —— a film about Trotsky which is apolitical, more interested in the generalized politics of assassination (the identification between assassin and victim) than in the significance of a particular historical event; and an adaptation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* which indicates almost no interest in the values of the Ibsen play. Despite the unlikeliness, even the perversity of their occasions, they are both rich and disturbing films.

The Assassination of Trotsky is the more interesting of the two and has been undervalued mainly, it seems to me, because it is not the movie an audience with an ideological stake in Trotsky wanted or expected to see. The landscape of Trotsky's exile has more vitality in Losey's eccentric work than Trotsky's ideas or even, since in exile there is nothing for him to do but talk, the great man himself. Moreover, Trotsky's mysterious assassin is, by virtue of his obsessive activity and opaqueness, the central figure in the movie. What concerns Losey —— it recurs in different disguise in almost every film —— is shared identity, insidious and vicarious psychological connections between characters who tend to be dissimilar in most other ways. Losey's obsession with doubleness —— the image in the mirror has become a kind of trademark in his cinema —— is evident not only in his treatment of projects but in his choice of them.

As he has had increasing freedom in his choice of subjects,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Losey's films have gotten increasingly literary. I don't mean the word *literary* here in a pejorative sense, merely to describe the nature of Losey's aspirations as an artist. *Accident,* the second of his collaborations with Harold Pinter, a highly literary and elegant film, seems to me the director's most fully realized and beautiful work. Pinter's obliqueness and economy —— no secret, this —— complement Losey's densely textured visual language.

Despite the controversy about "what it means" that greeted *Accident*'s appearance (which is like looking behind the screen to see if something is hidden there), the movie is perfectly simple to follow. The accident, the sound of it, frames the narrative, which is presented to us through flashback ostensibly through the recollection of Stephen (Dirk Bogarde), an Oxford don just turned forty and going through some kind of life crisis. Two students of Stephen's, William and Anna, coming to see him late at night after a party, crash their car down the road from his house. William is killed and Anna, who may or may not have been driving, is in apparent shock. The recollection of prior events is set off in Stephen by the image of Anna stepping on the dead William's face. What may make *Accident* seem obscure to a viewer concerned with "meaning" is a certain obliqueness in the connections between events, a highly evocative and concentrated visual style, and the difficulty of attributing motives for much of the behavior. There is no "meaning" to the accident. As it is with accidents, it happens.

The film admits to almost every possible configuration in the relationships of the characters. Stephen's rivalry (and identification) with his somewhat more successful friend, Charley (Stanley Baker), who is a novelist and television personality, is one of the central configurations. Stephen's involvement with his two pupils, William and Anna, another. Anna, it seems, is interested in William because he is Stephen's student and in Charley because he is Stephen's friend, Stephen the interlocutor in both relationships. Stephen, wanting to sleep with Anna, only partly aware of his motives, turns her over to William (surrogate and rival, son, other self) and to Charley (he puts a copy of Charley's novel in her purse —— a fine Losey touch), with whom identification is even more profound. If Stephen uses Charley and William as extensions

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of himself, he is also used by them as invisible third party in their separate involvements with Anna.

Stephen goes to bed with an old girl friend, Francesca, because he wants to make love to Anna but is too timid. He comes home from his unhappy affair —— Stephen's pregnant wife and children away temporarily —— to find Charley in his house, in his dressing gown in fact, having an affair with Anna. It is an extraordinary scene —— the discovery of his other self acting out his unadmitted desires like something dreamed. He is hungry when he sees Charley and Anna, another displaced feeling, and makes himself an omelet. Charley starts to eat Stephen's egg as if it were his. Anna reminds him that he said he didn't want an egg. The two men seem for the moment more involved with one another than with Anna.

Accident is full of such correspondences. Earlier, Charley, talking to William on the lawn at Stephen's house, narrates the plot of a novel that might be made out of the lives of the people around them. The story he tells is his own —— a restless don having an affair with a student —— although he attributes it to Stephen. The story told loudly enough for Stephen's wife to hear is an act in one sense of hostility, in another of disguise, in another of displaced confession. I don't mean to belabor the point, only to indicate the significance of confused identity in the film. Characters in *Accident* offer themselves through surrogates to each other.

Displaced behavior gives the film a certain surrealistic or dreamlike ambience. In love with Charley apparently, Anna announces to Stephen that she is going to marry William, asking Stephen to break the news to Charley. It's not that behavior in *Accident* is without credible motive, but that its charge, its reference point is elsewhere, so that we get the impression of observing a world slightly off-center. Somewhat earlier in the film, Stephen watches a cricket match where Anna's two lovers, William and Charley, take turns at bat. The scene, if it were merely symbolic, a definition of Stephen's role as vicarious spectator, would seem a heavy-handed device. The cricket, however, is beautifully detailed and exciting in itself, enriched for us like a sly joke by its suggestiveness.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We hear the sound of the crash at the end, the film coming full circle, suggesting, or meaning to suggest, that Stephen will have to live with the accident, for which he bears a certain implied responsibility, for the rest of his life. The ending underestimates the complication of the film's experience. Moreover, it seems conventionally moralistic as if the film were saying that Stephen, who has rescued and slept with Anna and triumphed (in a sense, certainly) over his two rivals, Charley and William, hasn't wholly gotten away with it. Stephen, as Bogarde plays him, as opposed to the self-deceived, decent narrator of the Nicholas Mosley novel, is a devious and secretive man, insidious at times, deeply competitive, never precisely in touch with himself. His sleeping with Anna after the accident, which is not in the novel, somewhere on the spectrum between extortion and rape, whatever else its moral shadings, is one of the few acts Stephen performs in the film directly on his own behalf. The very neatness of the resolution, and I think *The Go-Between* makes a similar tactical error, serves to deny the larger mystery of the work, translating metaphor into literalness.

If *Accident* is the ultimate Losey film, an occasion to give form and vision to his deepest concerns, *A Doll's House* seems a rather grudging project. What interested Losey about Ibsen's play? Clearly, since he does away with much of the play's vaunted dramaturgy, it is not Ibsen's technique of illuminating the present through gradual revelations of the past. The question of women's freedom? In perhaps the same way the exile of Trotsky interested him. Losey often achieves texture by working in subtle and sympathetic opposition to his ostensible subject. Much of the time, and this seems to me one of the most interesting aspects about his meticulously crafted films, his approach subverts the explicit intention of his subject. In *A Doll's House,* Losey is interested in the interiors of Nora's house, the winter landscape particularly as perceived through closed windows, and the parallel and vicarious relationships of the characters. *A Doll's House* was also an occasion for Losey —— this mentioned to me in an interview —— for doing a film with Jane Fonda.

Losey's *A Doll's House* starts with Nora (Jane Fonda) and Kristine (Delphine Seyrig) ice-skating, the scene both exhilarating

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and sad, suggestive of a last fling at being free. They say goodbye over tea and cakes — Nora to make a "loving" marriage to Torvald, Kristine rejecting the man she loves (Krogstad) to marry desperately for money. The film ends on a full-circle inversion of the beginning with Kristine coming together happily with Krogstad, and Nora, disillusioned with Torvald, leaving him. Nora's famous rhetorical speech at the close, as well as the metaphor of the title, seem appendages in Losey's film. Where Ibsen's play tends to be apsychological and rhetorical — its mystery communicated through symbol and portent — Losey's film is about displaced feelings, about the divided needs of self and community. Losey is concerned with parallels, his characters in various contexts secret sharers in the lives of others.

Krogstad's anger at Nora has to do with a complicated identification. A former classmate of her husband's, a man pursuing similar ambitions, Krogstad sees Torvald's success as in some way related to his own failure, as if the two were on some kind of balance beam. Also, he has been persecuted for the same crime Nora has committed with, until Krogstad comes to persecute her, no consequences to her at all. As in *Accident* where Stephen's and Charley's marriages are presented to us as parallel in certain ways by juxtaposing scenes of Stephen with each of the two women, Losey alternates near the end of *A Doll's House* scenes between Krogstad and his children and Nora and her children. In fact, Krogstad's avenging appearance in the film is associated with children. Nora, playing a game, is hiding under a table. When she lifts the tablecloth, expecting to see one or another of her children, Krogstad appears as if from nowhere. It gives the film, like much of Losey's later work, a nightmare ambience — reality coming out of the central character's deepest wishes and fears.

Losey's *A Doll's House* is a film about self-deception and displacement. Nora deceives her husband, borrowing money from a potential enemy, to save him. She refuses to borrow money from Dr. Rank because he announces he is in love with her, though she is willing to flirt with him to get the money. Nora believes that her "good" marriage is sustained by lying to her husband and offering the intimacy of her confidence to others. The maid, Anna-Marie, loves Nora's children in place of her own. Torvald, while thinking

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

himself a responsible and loving husband, is pathologically insensitive to his wife's feelings. And so on.

It is clear in Losey's *A Doll's House* that Nora leaves her husband for none of the rhetorical reasons she offers but because she recognizes how self-centered and unloving he is, and she is angry at him and deeply hurt at his betrayal. The film's ending is truer and harsher and less emotionally satisfying than Ibsen's. Losey has made a genuine movie out of *A Doll's House,* and though one might wonder why he bothered, it is as exciting a film as might be made from Ibsen's drawing room thesis play.

Seeing Losey's films in sequence at a retrospective showing at the National Film Theater in London, I became aware of the consistency and continuity of a career that seemed superficially to be divided into three or four distinct periods. Losey is the most cinematic, and I suspect most important, of contemporary English directors, his films increasingly assured and personal despite the distancing device of their cool formalism. If at times they seem merely elegant or, at their worst as in *Boom,* like pretentiously beautiful travelogues, there is always something to look at in a Losey film, moment-to-moment perceptual pleasures, small discoveries of what the world might look like if one could only see it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREUD AND DORA by Steven Marcus

(Continued from page 23)

IV.

If we turn now to the Prefatory Remarks it may be illuminating to regard them as a kind of novelistic framing action, as in these few opening pages Freud rehearses his motives, reasons, and intentions and begins at the same time to work his insidious devices upon the reader. First, exactly like a novelist, he remarks that what he is about to let us in on is positively scandalous, for "the complete elucidation of a case of hysteria is bound to involve the revelation of intimacies and the betrayal of . . . secrets." Second, again like a writer of fiction, he has deliberately chosen persons, places, and circumstances that will remain obscure; the scene is laid not in metropolitan Vienna but "in a remote provincial town." He has from the beginning kept the circumstance that Dora was his patient such a close secret that only one other physician —— "in whose discretion I have complete confidence" —— knows about it. He has "postponed publication" of this essay for "four whole years," also in the cause of discretion, and in the same cause has "allowed no name to stand which could put a non-medical reader on the scent." Finally he has buried the case even deeper by publishing it "in a purely scientific and technical periodical" in order to secure yet another "guarantee against unauthorized readers." He has in short made his own mystery within a mystery, and one of the effects of such obscure preliminary goings-on is to create a kind of Nabokovian frame —— what we have here is a history framed by an explanation which is itself slightly out of focus.

Third, he roundly declares, this case history is science and not literature: "I am aware that —— in this city, at least —— there are many physicians who (revolting though it may seem) choose to read a case history of this kind not as a contribution to the psychopathology of neuroses, but as a *roman à clef* designed for their private delectation." This may indeed be true; but it is equally true that nothing is more literary —— and more modern —— than the disavowal of all literary intentions. And when Freud does this again later on toward the end of "The Clinical Picture," the situation becomes even less credible. The passage merits quotation at length.

> I must now turn to consider a further complication to which I should certainly give no space if I were a man of letters engaged upon the creation of a mental state like this for a short story, instead of being a medical man engaged upon its dissection. The element to which I must now allude can only serve to obscure and efface the outlines of the fine poetic conflict which we have been able to ascribe to Dora. This element would rightly fall a sacrifice to the censorship of a writer, for he, after all, simplifies and abstracts

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> when he appears in the character of a psychologist. But in the world of reality, which I am trying to depict here, a complication of motives, an accumulation and conjunction of mental activities —— in a word, overdetermination —— is the rule.

In this context it is next to impossible to tell whether Freud is up to another of his crafty maneuverings with the reader or whether he is actually simply unconscious of how much of a modern and modernist writer he is. For when he takes to describing the difference between himself and some hypothetical man of letters and writer of short stories he is in fact embarked upon an elaborate obfuscation. That hypothetical writer is nothing but a straw man; and when Freud in apparent contrast represents himself and his own activities he is truly representing how a genuine creative writer writes. And this passage, we must also recall, came from the same pen that only a little more than a year earlier had written passages about Oedipus and Hamlet that changed for good the ways in which the civilized world would henceforth think about literature and writers.* What might be thought of as this sly unliterariness of Freud's turns up in other contexts as well.

If we return to the point in the Prefatory Remarks, we find that Freud then goes on to describe other difficulties, constraints, and problematical circumstances attaching to the situation in which he finds himself. Among them is the problem of "how to record for publication" even such a short case —— the long ones are as yet altogether impossible. Moreover, since the material that critically illuminated this case was grouped about two dreams, their analysis formed a secure point of departure for the writing. (Freud is of course at home with dreams, being the unchallenged master in the reading of them.) Yet this tactical solution pushes the *entire problematic* back only another step further, since Freud at once goes on to his additional presupposition, that only

---

*Some years earlier Freud had been more candid and more innocent about the relation of his writing to literature. In *Studies on Hysteria* he introduces his discussion of the case of Fräulein Elisabeth von R. with the following disarming admission.

> I have not always been a psychotherapist. Like other neuropathologists, I was trained to employ local diagnoses and electro-prognosis, and it still strikes me myself as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science. I must console myself with the reflection that the nature of the subject is evidently responsible for this, rather than any preference of my own. The fact is that local diagnosis and electrical reactions lead nowhere in the study of hysteria, whereas a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers enables me, with the use of a few psychological formulas, to obtain at least some kind of insight into the course of that affection.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those who are already familiar with "the interpretation of dreams" —— that is, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), whose readership in 1901 must have amounted to a little platoon indeed —— are likely to be satisfied at all with the present account. Any other reader "will find only bewilderment in these pages." As much as it is like anything else, this is like Borges —— as well as Nabokov. This off-putting and disconcerting quality, it should go without saying, is characteristically modern; the writer succumbs to no impulse to make it easy for the reader; on the contrary, he is by preference rather forbidding and does not extend a cordial welcome. The reader has been, as it were, "softened up" by his first encounter with this unique expository and narrative authority; he is thoroughly off balance and is as a consequence ready to be "educated," by Freud. By the same token, however, if he has followed these opening few pages carefully, he is certainly no longer as prepared as he was to assert the primacy and priority of his own critical sense of things. He is precisely where Freud —— and any writer —— wants him to be.

At the opening of Part I, "The Clinical Picture," Freud tells us that he begins his "treatment, indeed, by asking the patient to give me the whole story of his life and illness," and immediately adds that "the information I receive is never enough to let me see my way about the case." This inadequacy and unsatisfactoriness in the stories his patients tell is in distinct contrast to what Freud has read in the accounts rendered by his psychiatric contemporaries, and he continues by remarking that "I cannot help wondering how it is that the authorities can produce such smooth and exact histories in cases of hysteria. As a matter of fact the patients are incapable of giving such reports about themselves." There is a great deal going on here. In the first place there is the key assumption that everyone —— that every life, every existence —— has a story, to which there is appended a corollary that most of us probably tell that story poorly. Furthermore, the relations at this point in Freud's prose between the words "story," "history," and "report" are unspecified, undifferentiated, and unanalyzed and in the nature of the case contain and conceal a wealth of material.

Freud proceeds to specify what it is that is wrong with the stories his patients tell him. The difficulties are in the first instance formal shortcomings of *narrative*: the connections, "even the ostensible ones —— are for the most part incoherent," obscured and unclear; "and the sequence of different events is uncertain." In short these narratives are disorganized, and the patients are unable to tell a coherent story of their lives. What is more, he states, "the patients' inability to give an ordered history of their life in so far as it coincides with the history of their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

illness is not merely characteristic of the neurosis. It also possesses great theoretical significance." What we are led at this juncture to conclude is that Freud is implying that a coherent story is in some manner connected with mental health (at the very least with the absence of hysteria), and this in turn implies assumptions of the broadest and deepest kind about both the nature of coherence and the form and structure of human life. On this reading, human life is, ideally, a connected and coherent story, with all the details in explanatory place, and with everything (or as close to everything as is practically possible) accounted for, in its proper causal or other sequence. And inversely illness amounts at least in part to suffering from an incoherent story or an inadequate narrative account of oneself.

Freud then describes in technical detail the various types and orders of narrative insufficiency that he commonly finds; they range from disingenuousness, both conscious and unconscious, to amnesias and paramnesias of several kinds and various other means of severing connections and altering chronologies. In addition, he maintains, this discomposed memory applies with particular force and virulence to "the history of the illness" for which the patient has come for treatment. In the course of a successful treatment, this incoherence, incompleteness, and fragmentariness are progressively transmuted, as facts, events, and memories are brought forward into the forefront of the patient's mind. And he adds as a conclusion that these two aims "are coincident" —— they are reached simultaneously and by the same path. Some of the consequences that can be derived from these extraordinary observations are as follows. The history of any patient's illness is itself only a substory (or a subplot), although it is at the same time a vital part of a larger structure. Furthermore, in the course of psychoanalytic treatment, nothing less than "reality" itself is made, constructed, or reconstructed. A complete story —— "intelligible, consistent, and unbroken" —— is the theoretical, created end story. It is a story, or a fiction, not only because it has a narrative structure but also because the narrative account has been rendered in language, in conscious speech, and no longer exists in the deformed language of symptoms, the untranslated speech of the body. At the end —— at the successful end —— one has come into possession of one's own story. It is a final act of self-appropriation, the appropriation by oneself of one's own history. This is in part so because one's own story is in so large a measure a phenomenon of language, as psychoanalysis is in turn a demonstration of the degree to which language can go in the reading of all our experience. What we end with, then, is a fictional construction which is at the same time satisfactory to us in the form of the truth, and as the form of the truth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

No larger tribute has ever been paid to a culture in which the various narrative and fictional forms had exerted for centuries both moral and philosophical authority and which had produced as one of its chief climaxes the great bourgeois novels of the nineteenth century. Indeed we must see Freud's writings —— and method —— as themselves part of this culmination, and at the same moment, along with the great modernist novels of the first half of the twentieth century, as the beginning of the end of that tradition and its authority. Certainly the passages we have just dealt with contain heroic notions and offer an extension of heroic capabilities if not to all men then to most, at least as a possibility. Yet we cannot leave this matter so relatively unexamined, and must ask ourselves how it is that this "story" is not merely a "history" but a "case history" as well. We must ask ourselves how these associated terms are more intimately related in the nexus that is about to be wound and unwound before us. To begin to understand such questions we have to turn back to a central passage in the Prefatory Remarks. Freud undertakes therein "to describe the way in which I have overcome the *technical* difficulties of drawing up the report of this case history." Apparently "the report" and the "case history" referred to in this statement are two discriminable if not altogether discrete entities. If they are then we can further presume that, ideally at any rate, Dora (or any patient) is as much in possession of the "case history" as Freud himself. And this notion is in some part supported by what comes next. Freud mentions certain other difficulties, such as the fact that he "cannot make notes during the actual session . . . for fear of shaking the patient's confidence and of disturbing his own view of the material under observation." In the case of Dora, however, this obstacle was partly overcome because so much of the material was grouped about two dreams, and "the wording of these dreams was recorded immediately after the session" so that "they thus afforded a secure point of attachment for the chain of interpretations and recollections which proceeded from there." Freud then writes as follows:

> The case history itself was only committed to writing from memory after the treatment was at an end, but while my recollection of the case was still fresh and was heightened by my interest in its publication. Thus the record is not absolutely —— phonographically —— exact, but it can claim to possess a high degree of trustworthiness. Nothing of any importance has been altered in it except in some places the order in which the explanations are given; and this has been done for the sake of presenting the case in a more connected form.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Such a passage raises more questions than it resolves. The first sentence is a kind of conundrum in which case history, writing, and memory dance about in a series of logical entwinements, of possible alternate combinations, equivalences, and semiequivalences. These are followed by further equivocations about "the record," "phonographic" exactitude, and so forth —— the ambiguities of which jump out at one as soon as the terms begin to be seriously examined. For example, is "the report" the same thing as "the record," and if "the record" were "phonographically" exact would it be a "report"? Like the prodigious narrative historian that he is, Freud is enmeshed in an irreducible paradox of history: that the term itself refers to both the activity of the historian —— the writing of history —— and to the objects of his undertaking, what history is "about." I do not think, therefore, that we can conclude that Freud has created this thick context of historical contingency and ambiguity out of what he once referred to as Viennese *schlamperei.*

The historical difficulties are further compounded by several other sequential networks that are mentioned at the outset and that figure discernibly throughout the writing. First there is the virtual Proustian complexity of Freud's interweaving of the various strands of time in the actual account; or, to change the figure, his geological fusing of various time strata —— strata which are themselves at the same time fluid and shifting. We observe this most strikingly in the palimpsestlike quality of the writing itself, which refers back to *Studies on Hysteria* of 1895; which records a treatment that took place at the end of 1900 (although it mistakes the date by a year); which then was written up in first form during the early weeks of 1901; which was then exhumed in 1905, and was revised and rewritten to an indeterminable extent before publication in that year; and to which additional critical comments in the form of footnotes were finally appended in 1923. All of these are of course held together in vital connection and interanimation by nothing else than Freud's consciousness. But we must take notice as well of the copresence of still further different time sequences in Freud's presentation —— this copresence being itself a historical or novelistic circumstance of some magnitude. There is first the connection established by the periodically varied rehearsal throughout the account of Freud's own theory and theoretical notions as they had developed up to that point; this practice provides a kind of running applied history of psychoanalytic theory as its development is refracted through the embroiled medium of this particular case. Then there are the different time strata of Dora's own history, which Freud handles with confident and loving exactitude. Indeed he is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never more of a historical virtuoso than when he reveals himself to us as moving with compelling ease back and forth between the complex group of sequential histories and narrative accounts, with divergent sets of diction and at different levels of explanation, that constitute the extraordinary fabric of this work. He does this most conspicuously in his analytic dealings with Dora's dreams, for every dream, he reminds us, sets up a connection between two "factors," an "event during childhood" and an "event of the present day —— and it endeavors to reshape the present on the model of the remote past." The existence or recreation of the past in the present is in fact "history" in more than one of its manifold senses, and is one of Freud's many analogies to the following equally celebrated utterance.

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language. (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.*)

And just as Marx regards the history-makers of the past as sleepwalkers, "who required recollections of past world history in order to drug themselves concerning their own content," so Freud similarly regards the conditions of dream-formation, of neurosis itself, and even of the cure of neurosis, namely the analytic experience of transference. They are all of them species of living past history in the present. If the last of these works out satisfactorily, then a case history is at the end transfigured. It becomes an inseparable part of an integral life history. Freud is of course the master historian of those transfigurations.

V.

At the very beginning, after he had listened to the father's account of "Dora's impossible behavior," Freud abstained from comment, for, he remarks, "I had resolved from the first to suspend my judgement of the true state of affairs till I had heard the other side as well." Such a suspension inevitably recalls an earlier revolutionary project. In describing the originating plan of *Lyrical Ballads,* Coleridge writes that it "was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." We know very well that Freud had a more than ordinary capacity in this direction, and that one of the most dramatic moments in the prehistory of psychoanalysis had to do precisely with his taking on faith facts that turned out to be fantasies. Yet Freud is not only the reader suspending judgment and disbelief until he has heard the other side of the story; and he is not only the poet or writer who must induce a similar process in himself if he is to elicit it in his audience. He is also concomitantly a principal, an actor, a living character in the drama that he is unfolding in print before us. Moreover, that suspension of disbelief is in no sense incompatible with a large body of assumptions, many of them definite, a number of them positively alarming.

They have to do largely with sexuality and in particular with female sexuality. They are brought to a focus in the central scene of Dora's life (and case), a scene that Freud orchestrates with inimitable richness and to which he recurs thematically at a number of junctures with the tact and sense of form that one associates with a classical composer of music (or with Proust, Mann, or Joyce). Dora told this episode to Freud toward the beginning of their relation, after "the first difficulties of the treatment had been overcome." It is the scene between her and Herr K. that took place when she was fourteen years old —— that is, four years before the present tense of the case —— and acted Freud said as a "sexual trauma." The reader will recall that on this occasion Herr K. contrived to get Dora alone "at his place of business" in the town of B——, and then without warning or preparation "suddenly clasped the girl to him and pressed a kiss upon her lips." Freud then asserts that "this was *surely* just the situation to call up a *distinct* feeling of sexual excitement in a *girl* of *fourteen* who had *never before* been approached. But Dora had at that moment a violent feeling of disgust, tore herself free from the man, and hurried past him to the staircase and from there to the street door." (all italics are mine) She avoided seeing the K.'s for a few days after this, but then relations returned to "normal" —— if such a term survives with any permissible sense in the present context. She continued to meet Herr K., and neither of them ever mentioned "the little scene." Moreover, Freud adds, "according to her account Dora kept it a secret till her confession during the treatment," and he pretty clearly implies that he believes this.

This episode preceded by two years the scene at the lake that acted as the precipitating agent for the severe stage of Dora's illness; and it was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this later episode and the entire structure that she and others had elaborated about it that she had first presented to Freud, who continues thus:

> In this scene —– second in order of mention, but first in order of time —– the behavior of this child of fourteen was already entirely and completely hysterical. I should without question consider a person hysterical in whom an occasion for sexual excitement elicited feelings that were preponderantly or exclusively unpleasurable; and I should do so whether or not the person were capable of producing somatic symptoms.

Also, in Dora's feeling of disgust an obscure psychical mechanism called the "reversal of affect" was brought into play; but so was another process, and here Freud introduces —– casually and almost as a throw-away —– one more of his grand theoretical-clinical formulations, namely the idea of the "*displacement* of sensation," or as it has more commonly come to be referred to, the "displacement upward." "Instead of the genital sensation which would certainly have been felt by a healthy girl in such circumstances, Dora was overcome by the unpleasurable feeling which is proper to the tract of mucous membrane at the entrance to the alimentary canal —– that is by disgust." Although the disgust did not persist as a permanent symptom but remained behind residually and potentially in a general distaste for food and poor appetite, a second displacement upward was the resultant of this scene "in the shape of a sensory hallucination which occurred from time to time and even made its appearance while she was telling me her story. She declared that she could still feel upon the upper part of her body the pressure of Herr K.'s embrace." Taking into account certain other of Dora's "inexplicable" —– and hitherto unmentioned —– "peculiarities" (such as her phobic reluctance to walk past any man she saw engaged in animated conversation with a woman), Freud "formed in my own mind the following reconstruction of the scene. I believe that during the man's passionate embrace she felt not merely his kiss upon her lips but also his erect member against her body. The perception was revolting to her; it was dismissed from her memory, repressed, and replaced by the innocent sensation of pressure upon her thorax, which in turn derived an excessive intensity from its repressed source." This repressed source was located in the erotogenic oral zone, which in Dora's case had undergone a developmental deformation from the period of infancy. And thus, Freud concludes, "the pressure of the erect member probably led to an analogous change in the corresponding female organ, the clitoris; and the excitation of this second erotogenic zone was referred by a process of displacement to the simultaneous pressure against the thorax and became fixed there."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There is something questionable and askew in this passage of unquestionable genius. In it Freud is at once dogmatically certain and very uncertain. He is dogmatically certain of what the normative sexual response in young and other females is, and asserts himself to that effect. At the same time, he is, in my judgment, utterly uncertain about where Dora is, or was, developmentally. At one moment in the passage he calls her a "girl," at another a "child" —— but in point of fact he treats her throughout as if this fourteen-, sixteen-, and eighteen-year-old adolescent had the capacities for sexual response of a grown woman —— indeed at a later point he conjectures again that Dora either responded, or should have responded, to the embrace with specific genital heat and moisture. Too many determinations converge at this locus for us to do much more than single out a few of the more obvious influencing circumstances. In the first instance there was Freud's own state of knowledge about such matters at the time, which was better than anyone else's, but still relatively crude and undifferentiated. Second, we may be in the presence of what can only be accounted for by assuming that a genuine historical-cultural change has taken place between then and now. It may be that Freud was expressing a legitimate partial assumption of his time and culture when he ascribes to a fourteen-year-old adolescent —— whom he calls a "child" —— the normative responses that are ascribed today to a fully developed and mature woman. This supposition is borne out if we consider the matter from the other end, from the standpoint of what has happened to the conception of adolescence in our own time. It begins now in prepuberty and extends to —— who knows when? Certainly its extensibility in our time has reached well beyond the age of thirty. Third, Freud is writing in this passage as an advocate of nature, sexuality, openness, and candor —— and within such a context Dora cannot hope to look good. The very framing of the context in such a manner is itself slightly accusatory. In this connection we may note that Freud goes out of his way to tell us that he knew Herr K. personally and that "he was still quite young and of prepossessing appearance." If we let Nabokov back into the picture for a moment, we may observe that Dora is no Lolita, and go on to suggest that *Lolita* is an anti-*Dora*.

Yet we must also note that in this episode —— the condensed and focusing scene of the entire case history —— Freud is as much a novelist as he is an analyst. For the central moment of this central scene is a "reconstruction" that he "formed in [his] own mind." This pivotal construction becomes henceforth the principal "reality" of the case, and we must also observe that this reality remains Freud's more than Dora's, since he was never quite able to convince her of the plausibility of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

construction, or, to regard it from the other pole of the dyad, she was never quite able to accept this version of reality, of what "really" happened. Freud was not at first unduly distressed by this resistance on her side, for part of his understanding of what he had undertaken to do in psychoanalysis was to instruct his patients —— and his readers —— in the nature of reality. This reality was the reality that modern readers of literature have also had to be educated in. It was conceived of as a *world of meanings*. As Freud put it in one of those stop-you-dead-in-your-tracks footnotes that he was so expert in using strategically, we must at almost every moment "be prepared to be met not by one but by several causes —— by *overdetermination*." Thus the world of meanings is a world of multiple and compacted causations; it is a world in which everything has a meaning, which means that everything has more than one meaning. Every symptom is a concrete universal in several senses. It not only embodies a network of significances but also "serves to represent several unconscious mental processes simultaneously." By the same token, since it is a world almost entirely brought into existence, maintained, and mediated through a series of linguistic transactions between patient and physician, it partakes in full measure of the virtually limitless complexity of language, in particular its capacities for producing statements characterized by multiplicity, duplicity, and ambiguity of significance. Freud lays particular stress on the ambiguity, is continually on the lookout for it, and brings his own formidable skills in this direction to bear most strikingly on the analyses of Dora's dreams. The first thing he picks up in the first of her dreams is in fact an ambiguous statement, with which he at once confronts her.

As if this were not sufficient, the actual case itself was full of such literary and novelistic devices or conventions as thematic analogies, double plots, reversals, inversions, variations, betrayals, etc. —— full of what the "sharp-sighted" Dora as well as the sharp-sighted Freud thought of as "hidden connections" —— though it is important to add that Dora and her physician mean different things by the same phrase. And as the case proceeds Freud continues to confront Dora with such connections and tries to enlist her assistance in their construction. For example, one of the least pleasant characteristics in Dora's nature was her habitual reproachfulness —— it was directed mostly toward her father but radiated out in all directions. Freud regarded this behavior in his own characteristic manner: "A string of reproaches against other people," he comments, "leads one to suspect the existence of a string of self-reproaches with the same content." Freud accordingly followed the procedure of turning back "each simple reproach on the speaker herself." When Dora reproached her father with malingering in order to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

keep himself in the company of Frau K., Freud felt "obliged to point out to the patient that her present ill-health was just as much actuated by motives and was just as tendentious as had been Frau K.'s illness, which she had understood so well." At such moments Dora begins to mirror the other characters in the case, as they in differing degrees all mirror one another as well.

Part of that sense, we have come to understand, is that the writer is or ought to be conscious of the part that he —— in whatever guise, voice, or persona he chooses —— invariably and unavoidably plays in the world he represents. Oddly enough, although there is none of his writings in which Freud is more vigorously active than he is here, it is precisely this activity that he subjects to the least self-conscious scrutiny, that he almost appears to fend off. For example, I will now take my head in my hands and suggest that his extraordinary analysis of Dora's first dream is inadequate on just this count. He is only dimly and marginally aware of his central place in it (he is clearly incorporated into the figure of Dora's father), comments on it only as an addition to Dora's own addendum to the dream, and does nothing to exploit it. Instead of analyzing his own part in what he has done and what he is writing, Freud continues to behave like an unreliable narrator, treating the material about which he is writing as if it were literature but excluding himself from both that treatment and that material. At one moment he refers to himself as someone "who has learnt to appreciate the delicacy of the fabric of structures such as dreams," intimating what I surmise he incontestably believed, that dreams are natural works of art. And when, in the analysis of the second dream, we find ourselves back at the scene at the lake again; when Dora recalls that the only plea to her of Herr K. that she could remember is "You know I get nothing out of my wife"; when these were precisely the same words used by Dora's father in describing to Freud his relation to Dora's mother; and when Freud speculates that Dora may even "have heard her father make the same complaint . . . just as I myself did from his own lips" —— when a conjunction such as this occurs, then we know we are in a novel, probably by Proust. Time has recurred, the repressed has returned, plot, double plot, and counterplot have all intersected, and "reality" turns out to be something that for all practical purposes is indistinguishable from a systematic fictional creation.

Finally when at the very end Freud turns to deal —— rudimentarily as it happens —— with the decisive issue of the case, the transferences, everything is transformed into literature, into reading and writing. Transferences, he writes, "are new editions or facsimiles" of tendencies, fantasies, and relations in which "the person of the physician" replaces

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some earlier person. When the substitution is a simple one, the transferences may be said to be "merely new impressions or reprints": Freud is explicit about the metaphor he is using. Others "more ingeniously constructed . . . will no longer be new impressions, but revised editions." And he goes on, quite carried away by these figures, to institute a comparison between dealing with the transference and other analytic procedures. "It is easy to learn how to interpret dreams," he remarks, "to extract from the patient's associations his unconscious thoughts and memories, and to practise similar explanatory arts: for these the patient himself will always provide the text." The startling group of suppositions contained in this sentence should not distract us from noting the submerged ambiguity in it. The patient does not merely provide the text; he also *is* the text, the writing to be read, the language to be interpreted. With the transference, however, we move to a different degree of difficulty and onto a different level of explanation. It is only after the transference has been resolved, Freud concludes, "that a patient arrives at a sense of conviction of the validity of the connections which have been constructed during the analysis." I will refrain from entering the veritable series of Chinese boxes opened up by that last statement, and will content myself by proposing that in this passage as a whole Freud is using literature and writing not only creatively and heuristically —— as he so often does —— but defensively as well.

The writer or novelist is not the only partial role taken up unconsciously or semiconsciously by Freud in the course of this work. He also figures prominently in the text in his capacity as a nineteenth-century man of science and as a representative Victorian critic —— employing the seriousness, energy, and commitment of the Victorian ethos to deliver itself from its own excesses. We have already seen him affirming the positive nature of female sexuality, "the genital sensation which would certainly have been felt by a healthy girl in such circumstances," but which Dora did not feel. He goes a good deal further than this. At a fairly early moment in the analysis he faces Dora with the fact that she has "an aim in view which she hoped to gain by her illness. That aim could be none other than to detach her father from Frau K." Her prayers and arguments had not worked; her suicide letter and fainting fits had done no better. Dora knew quite well how much her father loved her, and, Freud continues to address her:

> I felt quite convinced that she would recover at once if only her father were to tell her that he had sacrificed Frau K. for the sake of her health. But, I added, I hoped he would not let himself be persuaded to do this, for then she would have learned what a powerful weapon she had in her hands, and she would certainly not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

> fail on every future occasion to make use once more of her liability to ill-health. Yet if her father refused to give way to her, I was quite sure she would not let herself be deprived of her illness so easily.

This is pretty strong stuff, considering both the age and her age. I think, moreover, that we are justified in reading an overdetermination out of this utterance of Freud's and in suggesting that he had motives additional to strictly therapeutic ones in saying what he did.

In a related sense Freud goes out of his way to affirm his entitlement to speak freely and openly about sex —— he is, one keeps forgetting, the great liberator and therapist of speech. The passage is worth quoting at some length.

> It is possible for a man to talk to girls and women upon sexual matters of every kind without doing them harm and without bringing suspicion upon himself, so long as, in the first place, he adopts a particular way of doing it, and, in the second place, can make them feel convinced that it is unavoidable. . . . The best way of speaking about such things is to be dry and direct; and that is at the same time the method furthest removed from the prurience with which the same subjects are handled in "society," and to which girls and women alike are so thoroughly accustomed. I call bodily organs and processes by their technical names. . . . *J'appelle un chat un chat.* I have certainly heard of some people —— doctors and laymen —— who are scandalized by a therapeutic method in which conversations of this sort occur, and who appear to envy either me or my patients the titillation which, according to their notions, such a method must afford. But I am too well acquainted with the respectability of these gentry to excite myself over them. . . . The right attitude is: "*pour fair une omelette il faut casser des oeufs.*"

I believe that Freud would have been the first to be amused by the observation that in this splendid extended declaration about plain speech (at this point he takes his place in a tradition coming directly down from Luther), he feels it necessary to disappear not once but twice into French. I think he would have said that such slips —— and the revelation of their meanings —— are the smallest price one has to pay for the courage to go on. And he goes on with a vengeance, immediately following this passage with another in which he aggressively refuses to moralize in any condemnatory sense about sexuality. As for the attitude that regards the perverse nature of his patient's fantasies as horrible:

> I should like to say emphatically that a medical man has no business to indulge in such passionate condemnation. . . . We are faced by a fact; and it is to be hoped that we shall grow accustomed to it, when we have learned to put our own tastes on one side. We must

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> learn to speak without indignation of what we call the sexual perversions. . . . The uncertainty in regard to the boundaries of what is to be called normal sexual life, when we take different races and different epochs into account, should in itself be enough to cool the zealot's ardor. We surely ought not to forget that the perversion which is the most repellent to us, the sensual love of a man for a man, was not only tolerated by the people so far our superiors in cultivation as were the Greeks, but was actually entrusted by them with important social functions.

We can put this assertion into one of its appropriate contexts by recalling that the trial and imprisonment of Oscar Wilde had taken place only five years earlier. And the man who is speaking out here has to be regarded as the greatest of Victorian physicians, who in this passage is fearlessly revealing one of the inner and unacknowledged meanings of the famous "tyranny of Greece over Germany." And as we shall see he has by no means reached the limits beyond which he will not go.

How far he is willing to go begins to be visible as we observe him sliding almost imperceptibly from being the nineteenth-century man of science to being the remorseless "teller of truth," the character in a play by Ibsen who is not to be deterred from his "mission." In a historical sense the two roles are not adventitiously related, any more than it is adventitious that the "truth" that is told often has unforeseen and destructive consequences and that it can rebound upon the teller. But we see him most vividly at this implacable work in the two great dream interpretations, which are largely "phonographic" reproductions of dramatic discourse and dialogue. Very early on in the analysis of the first dream, Freud takes up the dream element of the "jewel-case" and makes the unavoidable symbolic interpretation of it. He then proceeds to say the following to this Victorian maiden who has been in treatment with him for all of maybe six weeks.

> "So you are ready to give Herr K. what his wife withholds from him. That is the thought which has had to be repressed with so much energy, and which has made it necessary for every one of its elements to be turned into its opposite. The dream confirms once more what I had already told you before you dreamt it —— that you are summoning up your old love for your father in order to protect yourself against your love for Herr K. But what do all these efforts show? Not only that you are afraid of Herr K., but that you are still more afraid of yourself, and of the temptation you feel to yield to him. In short, these efforts prove once more how deeply you love him."

He immediately adds that "naturally Dora would not follow me in this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

part of the interpretation," but this does not deter him for a moment from pressing on with further interpretations of the same order; and this entire transaction is in its character and quality prototypical for the case as a whole. The Freud we have here is not the sage of the Berggasse, not the master who delivered the incomparable *Introductory Lectures* of 1916-1917, not the tragic Solomon of *Civilization and Its Discontents*. This is an earlier Freud, the Freud of the Fliess letters, the Freud of the case of Dora as well. It is Freud the relentless investigator pushing on no matter what. The Freud that we meet with here is a demonic Freud, a Freud who is the servant of his *daimon*. That *daimon* in whose service Freud knows no limits is the spirit of science, the truth, or "reality" — it doesn't matter which; for him they are all the same. Yet it must be emphasized that the "reality" Freud insists upon is very different from the "reality" that Dora is claiming and clinging to. And it has to be admitted that not only does Freud overlook for the most part this critical difference; he also adopts no measures for dealing with it. The demon of interpretation has taken hold of him, and it is this power that presides over the case of Dora.

In fact as the case history advances it becomes increasingly clear to the careful reader that Freud and not Dora has become the central character in the action. Freud the narrator does in the writing what Freud the first psychoanalyst appears to have done in actuality. We begin to sense that it is his story that is being written and not hers that is being retold. Instead of letting Dora appropriate her own story, Freud became the appropriator of it. The case history belongs progressively less to her than it does to him. It may be that this was an inevitable development, that it is one of the typical outcomes of an analysis that fails, that Dora was under any circumstances unable to become the appropriator of her own history, the teller of her own story. Blame does not necessarily or automatically attach to Freud. Nevertheless, by the time he gets to the second dream he is able to write, "I shall present the material produced during the analysis of this dream in the somewhat haphazard order in which it recurs to my mind." He makes such a presentation for several reasons, most of which are legitimate. But one reason almost certainly is that by this juncture it is his *own* mind that chiefly matters to him, and it is *his* associations to her dream that are of principal importance.

At the same time, as the account progresses, Freud has never been more inspired, more creative, more inventive; as the reader sees Dora gradually slipping further and further away from Freud, the power and complexity of the writing reach dizzying proportions. At times they pass

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over into something else. Due allowance has always to be made for the absolutizing tendency of genius, especially when as in the case of Dora the genius is writing with license of a poet and the ambiguity of a seer. But Freud goes beyond this.

When Dora reports her second dream, Freud spends two hours of inspired insight in elucidating some of its meanings. "At the end of the second session," he writes, "I expressed my satisfaction at the results." The satisfaction in question is in large measure self-satisfaction, for Dora responded to Freud's expression of it with the following words uttered in "a depreciatory tone: 'Why, has anything so remarkable come out?' " That satisfaction was to be of short duration, for Dora opened the third session by telling Freud that this was the last time she would be there —— it was December 31, 1900. Freud's remarks that "her breaking off so unexpectedly just when my hopes of a successful termination of the treatment were at their highest, and her thus bringing those hopes to nothing —— this was an unmistakable act of vengeance on her part" are only partly warranted. There was, or should have been, nothing unexpected about Dora's decision to terminate; indeed Freud himself on the occasion of the first dream had already detected such a decision on Dora's part and had communicated this finding to her. Moreover, his "highest" hopes for a successful outcome of the treatment seem almost entirely without foundation. In such a context the hopes of success almost unavoidably become a matter of self-reference and point to the immense *intellectual* triumph that Freud was aware he was achieving with the material adduced by his patient. On the matter of "vengeance," however, Freud cannot be faulted; Dora was, among many other things, certainly getting her own back on Freud by refusing to allow him to bring her story to an end in the way he saw fit. And he in turn is quite candid about the injury he felt she had caused him. "No one who, like me," he writes, "conjures up the most evil of those half-tamed demons that inhabit the human breast, and seeks to wrestle with them, can expect to come through the struggle unscathed."

This admission of vulnerability, which Freud artfully manages to blend with the suggestion that he is a kind of modern combination of Jacob and Faust, is in keeping with the weirdness and wildness of the case as a whole and with this last hour. That hour recurs to the scene at the lake, two years before, and its aftermath. And Freud ends this final hour with the following final interpretation. He reminds Dora that she was in love with Herr K.; that she wanted him to divorce his wife; that even though she was quite young at the time she wanted " 'to wait for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him, and you took it that he was only waiting till you were grown up enough to be his wife. I imagine that this was a perfectly serious plan for the future in your eyes.' " But Freud does not say this in order to contradict it or categorize it as a fantasy of the adolescent girl's unconscious imagination. On the contrary, he has very different ideas in view, for he goes on to tell her,

> "You have not even got the right to assert that it was out of the question for Herr K. to have had any such intention; you have told me enough about him that points directly towards his having such an intention. Nor does his behavior at L—— contradict this view. After all, you did not let him finish his speech and do not know what he meant to say to you."

He has not done with her yet, for he then goes on to bring in the other relevant parties and offers her the following conclusion:

> "Incidentally, the scheme would by no means have been so impracticable. Your father's relation with Frau K. . . . made it certain that her consent to a divorce could be obtained; and you can get anything you like out of your father. Indeed, if your temptation at L—— had had a different upshot, this would have been *the only possible solution for all the parties concerned.*" (italics mine)

No one —— at least no one in recent years —— has accused Freud of being a swinger, but this is without question a swinging solution that is being offered. It is of course possible that he feels free to make such a proposal only because he knows that nothing in the way of action can come of it; but with him you never can tell —— as I hope I have already demonstrated. One has only to imagine what in point of ego strength, balance, and self-acceptance would have been required of Dora alone in this arrangement of wife-and-daughter-swapping to recognize at once its extreme irresponsibility, to say the least. At the same time we must bear in mind that such a suggestion is not incongruent with the recently revealed circumstance that Freud analyzed his own daughter. Genius makes up its own rules as it goes along —— and breaks them as well. This "only possible solution" was one of the endings that Freud wanted to write to Dora's story; he had others in mind besides, but none of them were to come about. Dora refused or was unable to let him do this; she refused to be a character in the story that Freud was composing for her, and wanted to finish it herself. As we now know, the ending she wrote was a very bad one indeed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VI.

In this extraordinary work Freud and Dora often appear as unconscious, parodic refractions of each other. Both of them insist with implacable will upon the primacy of "reality," although the realities each has in mind differ radically. Both of them use reality, "the truth," as a weapon. Freud does so by forcing interpretations upon Dora before she is ready for them or can accept them. And this aggressive truth bounds back upon the teller, for Dora leaves him. Dora in turn uses her version of reality —— it is "outer" reality that she insists upon —— aggressively as well. She has used it from the outset against her father, and five months after she left Freud she had the opportunity to use it against the K.'s. In May of 1901 one of the K.'s children dies. Dora took the occasion to pay them a visit of condolence ——

> She took her revenge on them.... To the wife she said: "I know you have an affair with my father"; and the other did not deny it. From the husband she drew an admission of the scene by the lake which he had disputed, and brought the news of her vindication home to her father.

She told this to Freud fifteen months after she had departed, when she returned one last time to visit him —— to ask him, without sincerity, for further help, and "to finish her story." She finished her story, and as for the rest Freud remarks, "I do not know what kind of help she wanted from me, but I promised to forgive her for having deprived me of the satisfaction of affording her a far more radical cure for her troubles."

But the matter is not hopelessly obscure, as Freud himself has already confessed. What went wrong with the case, "its great defect, which led to its being broken off prematurely," was something that had to do with the transference; and Freud writes that "I did not succeed in mastering the transference in good time." He was in fact just beginning to learn about this therapeutic phenomenon, and the present passage is the first really important one about it to have been written. It is also in the nature of things heavily occluded. On Dora's side the transference went wrong in several senses. In the first place there was the failure on her part to establish an adequate positive transference to Freud. She was not free enough to respond to him erotically —— in fantasy —— or intellectually —— by accepting his interpretations: both or either of these being prerequisites for the mysterious "talking cure" to begin to work. And in the second, halfway through the case a negative transference began to emerge, quite clearly in the first dream. Freud writes that he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"was deaf to this first note of warning," and as a result this negative "transference took me unawares, and, because of the unknown quantity in me which reminded Dora of Herr K., she took her revenge on me as she wanted to take her revenge on him, and deserted me as she believed herself to have been deceived and deserted by him." This is, I believe, the first mention in print of the conception that is known as "acting out" —— out of which, one may incidentally observe, considerable fortunes have been made.

We are, however, in a position to say something more than this. For there is a reciprocating process in the analyst known as the countertransference, and in the case of Dora this went wrong too. Although Freud describes Dora at the beginning of the account as being "in the first bloom of youth —— a girl of intelligent and engaging looks," almost nothing attractive about her comes forth in the course of the writing. As it unwinds, and it becomes increasingly evident that Dora is not responding adequately to Freud, it also becomes clear that Freud is not responding favorably to this response, and that he doesn't in fact like Dora very much. He doesn't like her negative sexuality, her inability to surrender to her own erotic impulses. He doesn't like "her really remarkable achievements in the direction of intolerable behavior." He doesn't like her endless reproachfulness. Above all, he doesn't like her inability to surrender herself to him. For what Freud was as yet unprepared to face was not merely the transference, but the countertransference as well —— in the case of Dora it was largely a negative countertransference —— an unanalyzed part of himself. I should like to suggest that this cluster of unanalyzed impulses and ambivalences was in part responsible for Freud's writing of this great text immediately after Dora left him. It was his way —— and one way —— of dealing with, mastering, expressing, and neutralizing such material. Yet the neutralization was not complete; or we can put the matter in another way and state that Freud's creative honesty was such that it compelled him to write the case of Dora as he did, and that his writing has allowed us to make out in this remarkable fragment a still fuller picture. As I have said before, this fragment of Freud's is more complete and coherent than the fullest case studies of anyone else. Freud's case histories are a new form of literature —— they are creative narratives that include their own analysis and interpretation. Nevertheless, like the living works of literature that they are, the material they contain is always richer than the original analysis and interpretation that accompany it; and this means that future generations will recur to these works and will find in them a language they are seeking and a story they need to be told.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Robert Boyers

THE LAINGIAN FAMILY

The attack on the nuclear family will probably turn out to be the most important development of our period, a phenomenon beside which other militancies, of whatever character, will eventually seem ephemeral and even somewhat parochial. What we confront is the general loss of faith in the efficacy of the family unit to nurture the kind of people most of us apparently think we ought to be. With this particular erosion a whole variety of alternate faiths have been intermittently promoted —– faith in the extended family, in the communal mode, faith in the necessary breakdown of sex-role distinctions and the consequent emergence of unisexual experience, faith in life without children —– the list can be indefinitely extended. Most of these alternate faiths have been promoted, bought, and largely forgotten in a spirit of casual abandon the likes of which many of us could not have imagined. Especially where the front men and promoters have been professional intellectuals and psychoanalysts we have been struck by a specious commitment to change for its own sake and to liberations on behalf of liberation which we would not readily have identified with cultivated and thoughtful people.

Obviously, we had no right to be surprised, for the prospect of overcoming everything that may conceivably be overcome has seemed to most intellectuals a delightful prospect at least since the time of Nietzsche, and those who have found much to be stimulated by in *Zarathustra* might certainly have seen where all of it would lead. The spiritual timbre of the counterculture is not often Nietzschean, of course, but the roots are clear enough. Perhaps a more appropriate, and less distant forerunner, is Wilhelm Reich, whose assaults on the family and other established cultural institutions are decidedly more pointed and programmatic than Nietzsche's, if no less eccentric. Reich, to be sure, identified himself with a whole range of liberation to which Nietzsche could not have been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

less favorably disposed, but both have lately been appropriated by movements whose distinctive coloration neither could have foreseen. That Reich would have felt a good deal more comfortable with recent developments in the counterculture than Nietzsche may be explained at once by the greater proximity of his age to ours and by the superficiality of his thought by comparison with Nietzsche's.

In his *Character Analysis,* Reich states what for our time has become almost a conventional notion: "The first and most important place of reproduction of the social order is the patriarchal family which creates in children a character structure which makes them amenable to the later influences of an authoritarian order." Or again, in *The Sexual Revolution,* Reich argues that the family "creates the individual who is forever afraid of life and of authority and thus creates again and again the possibility that masses of people can be governed by a handful of individuals." For precise understanding of "the authoritarian order" one must go to sources other than Reich's books, as one will need to look elsewhere for a scrupulous analysis of the character structure to which he refers. What is important, though, is that we have in Reich an unqualified attack on the nuclear family, launched from a perspective that considers both its impact on individuals and on the larger social order that sustains, and is sustained by, those individuals. As such he has given encouragement and direction to a variety of thinkers, whether serious or tritely polemical, who are unhappy about that culture. In Herbert Marcuse or Norman Brown or Ronald Laing, to name only a few of the more serious thinkers, we can find Reich's views writ large, though frequently his influence is obscured by references in their work to more respectable authors.

In Laing, for example, Reich has figured very prominently, though Laing has lately taken some pains to dissociate himself from despoilers of the nuclear family ethic. In his early work, of course, though there were pointers careful readers might have seen, Laing was careful not to draw large conclusions about the nature of families or to deal in abstractions like "the character structure of western man." As anyone knows who has kept abreast of developments in psychotherapy during the last fifteen years or so, Laing was originally part of a very widespread and still growing tendency in mental health circles to focus attention on psychotic patients, people who had in an earlier time been diagnosed as relatively incurable, hopelessly resistant to all forms of therapy, whether Freudian, Jungian, or whatever. Teams of therapists and researchers had worked quietly, roughly since the end of the Second World War, trying to understand the experience of schizophrenic patients and of others diagnosed as generally untreatable. Men like Nathan Ackerman, Theo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dore Lidz, and Lyman Wynne had hit tentatively upon a number of conclusions regarding the relation between particular individuals labeled schizophrenic and their families of origin. In the fifties and early sixties Laing came to conclusions similar to theirs, and began to publish them in a series of books whose popularity has made familiar even to lay people the dynamics of psychosis and the rationale for family therapy. In a book like *The Divided Self,* Laing worked scrupulously to locate and understand the nexal dynamics of the schizophrenic family. His object was not to assign blame or to discover new worlds but to understand the sources of interpersonal mystification, and to see whether the fiercely consistent perspective of psychotic patients might not have something to teach the rest of us.

In his subsequent writings, though, Laing came more and more to grow restive in the role of alien therapist and sensitive observer. The writing became consequently more polemical and, in fact, insensitive. In a 1962 article entitled "Series and Nexus in the Family," Laing wrote satirically of a fictitious Peter and Paul, members of a nuclear family in which the demand for reciprocity was seen by Laing as coercive and intolerable:

> If Peter is prepared to make sacrifices for Paul, so Paul should be prepared to make sacrifices for Peter, or else he is selfish, ungrateful, callous, ruthless, etc. "Sacrifice" under these circumstances consists in Peter impoverishing himself to do something for Paul. It is the tactic of *enforced debt.*
>
> One way of putting this is that each person *invests in the other.*

In his essay "Self, Symptom and Society," Peter Sedgwick responded to the passage as follows:

> The blindness of these passages is unbelievable. For, of course, assumptions of a continuing reciprocity, along with anticipations of a possible limit to the relationship in the event of a non-return of affection or action, are very common indeed outside family ghettoes and even outside families.

Further,

> To "invest in" another being's anticipated response is seen as literally capitalistic and hence disreputable: the "debt" of a relationship has to be "enforced," a deliberate *tactic.* The converse might be expected to follow: that the sacrifice of one individual for another ought to continue indefinitely even if it remains unacknowledged or despised. But ought we to expect such saintly expenditure of infinite pains in our families?

What we get in Laing, in other words, is a growing conviction that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

since families generally do not do for their members what we would like them to, and since some at least are the source of severe functional disorders in one or more members, there is something in the nature of the institution itself that makes it unsuitable in the present state of culture. Moreover, since it is assumed that mental disorders like schizophrenia are functional rather than genetic in origin, if mystification patterns are observable in the life of schizophrenic families, it is more than likely that such patterns will characterize so-called normal family communications patterns as well. How do we know? Since, when we are considering so-called normal families, we have no patients to point to, no outrageously disrupted speech patterns or monstrously aggressive behaviors to work from, we need to posit something else as evidence. It is at this point that Laing turns to the social order, and culls from his observation one example after another of "mad" behavior —— the bombing of cities, the hideous regimentation of masses of people under the guise of benevolent liberality, and so on —— phenomena discussed at length by Marcuse and others. That is to say, from the consideration of severely disturbed people in their family settings, Laing progressively turned his attention to the dynamics of those families or institutions, until he concluded that so much could go wrong in families that they had inevitably to be cast as sources of oppression and mystification, and madness politically certified as perfect sanity. From this it was but a short step to those chapters in *The Politics of Experience* in which Laing proclaims the superior authenticity of madness, at least as a step through which enlightened people will inevitably pass, especially by comparison with those lives of quiet desperation and spiritless normality to which most men are committed.

The attack on the family has been taken up by all manner of therapists, but as yet not many have rallied to the figure of schizophrenic as seer, even as Laing himself has seemed no longer to be taken with the notion in its original crudeness. Even Laing's most ardent disciples, those in a position to follow his lead professionally, have seemed to step back from claims earlier made on behalf of the view that much madness is divinest sense. The books by Morton Schatzman[1] and Joseph Berke,[2] two American psychoanalysts who have worked closely with Laing in London, suggest that the Laing circle may have some useful things to tell us. Neither book is well written nor carefully put together, and that is a problem, but one may hope that the authors will come to think rather

1. *Soul Murder: Persecution in the Family.* Random House. $6.95.
2. *Mary Barnes: Two Accounts of a Journey through Madness.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $7.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

differently of their scholarly responsibilities in the future. Though neither Schatzman nor Berke has come out mindlessly in polemical rage against institutions like the family, their books do strongly point to defects and snares that would seem almost impossible to work through for most ordinary people. Now I happen to think that such an account of the family is misleading, but that is not the thrust of my argument with these men. What I most object to is their indulgence in speculation of a most willful and teasing sort, speculation that always falls short of the most important and interesting questions. Is this a matter of oversight? I think not. To the contrary, both Schatzman and Berke understand as well as anyone the very special nature of the work they have done, the limitations of what may legitimately be concluded on the basis of their experiences. Yet their books suggest, time after time, that they are really into something quite sweeping, something that may change the way most of us think about our lives, our families, our ills. Nowhere does either man come right out and say as much, but the suggestion is ever present.

Schatzman's book, which has already generated considerable interest in clinical circles, I find particularly irritating in this regard, though it is provocative and, to a point, illuminating. The book takes as its subject the dysfunction clinically known as paranoia, but it presumes to discover what may be a paradigm for much mental illness. Taken strictly as a revision of traditional views of paranoia, the book is surely to be welcomed, as indeed it has been by therapists like Nathan Ackerman and Otto Will. According to Freud, "What lies at the core of the conflict in cases of paranoia among males is a homosexual wishful phantasy of *loving a man*. . . ." Since the phantasy is generally unacceptable to the person who experiences it, the love is turned into hate: " 'I do not *love him* — *I hate him.*' This contradiction, which must have run thus in the unconscious, cannot, however, become conscious to a paranoic in this form. The mechanism of symptom-formation in paranoia requires that internal perceptions — feelings — shall be replaced by external perceptions. Consequently the proposition 'I hate him' becomes transformed by projection into another one '*He hates* (persecutes) *me*, which will justify me in hating him!' " Schatzman's response to Freud follows the argument of Karl Menninger and others who have addressed themselves to the theory of paranoia, but the implications of Schatzman's argument are much more resonant, even political. From a reevaluation of the Schreber case, which was the basis of Freud's original theories of paranoia, Schatzman concludes that "a mind can use the same sequence of operations [described by Freud in connection with an initiating

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

homosexual phantasy] —— denial, reversal, and projection —— in relation to any desires it forbids itself." That is to say, in Schatzman's view, it is a good deal more likely that most people who reveal paranoid tendencies are responding not to homosexual love of an improper sort, but to hatred pure and simple, hatred of a terrible and castrating father, perhaps; not, consequently, to feelings of persecution, but to a real persecution so awful that it must be transformed by symptom formation in order truly to be experienced.

Schatzman's case is a very strong one, taken as an attempt to revise standard views of paranoia and to understand the dynamics of particular families. Moreover it is extremely persuasive in pointing out the limitations in Freud's entire manner of therapeutic inquiry. Essentially, Schatzman contends that Freud had available to him in the Schreber case a variety of materials of which he was aware but that he chose not to consider, because without them he could provide an explanation of the patient Schreber that was altogether consistent with theories Freud had already developed. More, these theories themselves reflect an unwillingness, on the part of Freud and most other people, to consider the possibility that those who are ill may have been forced into strategies of withdrawal and denial by others who have at least as much to do with the case as the patient. Obviously one's first concern will be for the individual who cannot cope, who has sought help in the first place, but Schatzman argues that we may not assume the central agent in the generation of the patient's misery is the patient. That Freud refused to acknowledge this possibility is all the more distressing in the Schreber case, since Schreber was not an actual patient of Freud's, but a figure whom Freud analyzed through a volume of published memoirs. Why, Schatzman wonders, though the answers are implicit in the very putting of the question, did Freud not also analyze the many books written by Schreber's father, a famous German physician, whose works on child rearing were very widely read and admired in the nineteenth century and which retain some influence even today.

Now this is not the place to rehearse the details of the Schreber case, though the details are fascinating, to be sure. What is unmistakable in Schatzman's representation of it, however, is that the patient Schreber experienced all manner of delusion, that these delusions were crude transformations of experiences actually suffered by Schreber in the course of his childhood, and that his father, the esteemed German author and physician, very deliberately brutalized his son in the interests of correct discipline and the achievement of healthy habits. The brutalizing procedures are described in meticulous detail in the father's books,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which recommend a wide range of devices, mechanical or otherwise, to train children: these include bathing children's eyes in cold water, strapping portions of the child's body to the bed when he sleeps, and so on. "Schreber," Schatzman tells us, "suffers from reminiscences. His body embodies his past. He retains memories of what his father did to him as a child; although part of his mind knows they are memories, 'he' does not. He is considered insane not only because of the quality of his experiences, but because he misconstrues their *mode:* he *remembers,* in some cases perfectly accurately, how his father treated him, but thinks he *perceives* events occurring in the present for which he imagines God, rays, little men, etc., are the agents." In fact, "Schreber knows what he most needs to know, but does not know he knows it. When he calls his experiences miracles he denies what he knows, denies he is denying anything," and so on.

To which I say, most rewarding and persuasive. And yet, I am troubled, as earlier suggested. What are we to take from Schatzman's observation? According to him, a great deal indeed, for the authoritarian patriarchal nineteenth-century family is in some respects still with us, so that many of us are still unable to see and to criticize the inevitable tyrannies to which it gives rise. Schatzman echoes Laing when he writes that "anyone brought up in this type of family who learned to live successfully with its rules and roles, its premises and practices, would not be likely to see it as the source of someone else's feelings of persecution." The fact is, though, that at this time in the progress of western culture we are all too ready to lend a sympathetic ear to those who see themselves as victimized and persecuted. It may be true that ideological blind spots of a nineteenth-century variety remain for some of us, even for trained analysts, but it is hardly reasonable to contend that most people live so successfully with institutional rules and roles that they do not feel it necessary to ask questions. If the family is under attack, for instance, it is because many in our culture assume that rules and roles of whatever sort inhibit human development and suppress sympathies. In the last fifty years the shift in our perspective on such matters as fidelity, trust, and responsibility has been nothing less than revolutionary, so that most of us now anticipate the failure of all institutions on a scale that justifies virtually any behavioral excess or experimentation. I do not think we need anyone to suggest that children who suffer do so at the hands of generally castrating fathers and under the auspices of authoritarian institutions demanding unconditional obedience to their doctrines. Dissidence, albeit of a petty and deeply neurotic kind, has by now become the rule of the day, not order and obedience. It may be satisfying to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

describe bogeymen in the way nineteenth-century sufferers legitimately could, but such descriptions will not address the situation to which most of us respond.

Laing has described the tactic of enforced debt, Schatzman the case of the castrating and persecuting father. In the view of Laing and his colleagues, these are closely related phenomena: in both normal and disturbed families, violations of individual freedom are the rule, not the exception. In some inexplicable way, liberation has become for counterculture thinkers and analysts not an intention of man, but a function of nature that is everywhere perversely denied. Thus, for Schatzman, a significant corrective to earlier theories like the Oedipus complex is what the anthropologist George Devereux has called the Laius complex, according to which agency for disturbances like Schreber's is located squarely in the bearer of authority. As developed in Schatzman's book, the notion seems plausible enough, but one wonders how useful it can be as a general explanatory principle for what goes on in families. Most fathers do not in fact tremble at the affection they feel for their children, do not need in fact to convert paternal love to hate nor perform any of the other transformations we would describe as symptom formations. Why should Schatzman make so much of Devereux's idea, interesting though it is? On the final page of his book he clearly indicates that we all have much to learn from the Schreber case about persecutions with which we are, presumably, at least intermittently familiar. To speak, as Schatzman does, of "secret premises about 'normal' family life that most people share" is to suggest that there is something dire to be discovered in the dynamics of family interaction which the courageous among us will find.

What I should like to suggest here, ever so briefly, is that liberation is by no means an intention of nature, but a distinctly human intention that exists alongside a good many others. We may not, I should think, fear to encourage those reciprocities Laing indicts any more than we may fear to encourage that authoritativeness that is a function of every binding institutional order. I have a terribly uneasy feeling when spokesmen for the counterculture speak of authoritarian institutions, for they appear to confuse with them such things as simple restraints and limitations. Thus, for Laing, it is a violation of nature to suggest that families may well have to train children to invest in one another if they are to learn what relation customarily entails; for Schatzman, families interfere with nature when, either deliberately or casually, they obscure the nature of perception as moral choice, when they enable members to conceal from themselves or one another the dynamics of their interaction

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

— he has apparently little sympathy with the notion that what binds people to one another has to do with associations sunk so deep that frequently they are not much available to scrutiny. Fidelity is not often a product of scrupulous analysis, after all. When institutions fail us we inevitably demand a demystification of their characteristic operations, but those of us who get along reasonably well in these institutions will not compulsively make such demands in the interests of some abstract clarity or authenticity as cold as it is finally disappointing.

The book by Joseph Berke and Mary Barnes is the account of a by now famous therapeutic relationship in which a schizophrenic middle-aged woman was permitted to regress to a stage of almost total infantilism in order to be reborn again. The most interesting aspect of the book is the alternation between two points of view reflecting on the same events and experiences. Like other works coming out of the Laing circle, the book has a good deal to say about the way families work, but inevitably in what we are shown they work terribly or not at all. To be compelled to the idea that "psychosis was our culture's means of archetypal renewal of the inner self," after all, would indicate a rather dire view of what the culture's remaining viable institution, the family, has done to most of us. In this view, those of us who cope, who learn to "invest" and get by, do so most often at the expense of our inner selves. It is a familiar argument in a time when the educated classes walk about with a perpetual bad conscience. But I am not so concerned with that argument as with another more prominently considered in the book — namely, that it is illegitimate to manage or to handle people, as though to do so were inevitably a denial of their freedom and a reduction of such people to the status of objects. Now I don't know that management isn't an aspect of every human relation that endures, and I am certain that it is intrinsic to the therapeutic relation. Why this should be so hard for the Laingian therapist to acknowledge puzzles me. Always lurking in these works is the suggestion that because families sometimes manipulate their members intolerably, and because manipulation is so much a part of contemporary political systems, those of us who know better will surely refrain from "handling" of any kind. Thus, a psychiatrist who finds a patient potentially disruptive at a session involving many people and who has her removed is roundly condemned as a blind and anxious tyrant who might be seen, with only slight adjustment of the conventional perspective, as more severely disturbed than the patient. Similarly, attempts to break down rigid staff-patient relationships are mocked as deceitful and inadequate in most mental hospitals. "Patients were supposed to talk honestly about their feelings, and were often

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

punished for what they said [Berke never tells us about this punishment], but the staff was under no pressure to do so. Power remained in the hands of the administration, although everyone would be told that the group was free and open." Just so, "everyone talking freely of what's on his or her mind clashed with the fact that the door to the ward was not even open." To dwell on such matters is to obscure the nature of the disturbance afflicting so many inmates of mental institutions, and since Berke understands so well what is wrong, we are surprised to see him so insistent here. Many of the patients have been brought to their confusion precisely by the failure of parents and others to set limits and make clear distinctions. What have the Laingians been telling us, after all, if not that mental illness is a strategy by which one opts out of intolerable situations many of which are experienced as too confusing to sort out. The function of the analyst is, at least in part, to indicate the nature of the *decision* involved in breakdown, and to demonstrate a resolve not actively to play roles in which he has been cast by patients. In this way, limits are maintained, conventions like the therapeutic relation acknowledged as conventions even as they are participated in. The capacity to admit and to manipulate conventions is a strength that must be achieved if the patient is to be restored to any sort of confidence. To suggest to patients in hospitals that they are as free to go as to come, to be leaders as to be victims, after they have cast themselves as wards of an institution, is to confuse matters further than necessary.

The Berke-Barnes book is, though, a moving and in some ways an instructive document. While it can in no way be taken as a model of the therapeutic relation —— Berke is an extraordinarily compassionate and gifted man of a kind we may not hope to find in any profession —— it does provide an accurate account of the extent to which therapy with severely disturbed individuals has lately been developed, and of what results may be anticipated. More, the book has a good deal to tell us about the therapeutic acceptance of anger and of submission, potential elements of experience many of us have denied ourselves. Had Berke focused on these matters, and dwelled less insistently upon the fashionable issues, he'd have told us as much about the disabilities of "normal" experiences as about breakdown and renewal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There's No Magazine Shortage

get on line for PR here

PARTISAN REVIEW
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903

Enter ☐ *my subscription* ☐ *extend my subscription*
for ☐ *1 year at $7.50* ☐ *2 years at $14.50*
*☐ *1 year at $6.50 student rate* ☐ *2 years at $12.50 student rate*

My check is enclosed ☐ *send me free issue* ☐ *Please bill me*

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... *State* ..... *Zip* .....

* *I am a student at* .....

174

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

COUPLES

PORTRAIT OF A MARRIAGE. By Nigel Nicolson. Atheneum. Illustrated, $10.00.

FROM TIME TO TIME. By Hannah Tillich. Stein & Day. $7.95.

"Now that I know everything, I love her the more, as my father did, *because* she was tempted, *because* she was weak. She was a rebel. . . . " Nigel Nicolson is summing up his response to the sexual vagaries of his mother, the writer Vita Sackville-West, but his statement, which expectably enough is quoted on the dust jacket of the latest of our best-selling English literary biographies, is no less misleading than it is high-minded: as Mr. Nicolson himself makes plain in *Portrait of a Marriage,* Vita Sackville-West was not "tempted" by homosexuality, she gave herself to it throughout her life, with zest, and was often — very much so in the notable instance of Virginia Woolf — far more the seducer than the seduced. As to being "weak" and a "rebel," how is anyone either weak or a rebel who, child of Knole, one of the greatest of English houses, has both within and in back of her the fullest power and license of her class? The hallmark of Vita's world, not alone the aristocratic world of her birth but the Bloomsbury society in which she elected to live, was indulgence of the personal will, particularly of the sexual will — we remember from a recent biography of the Bloomsbury painter, Carrington, that when Carrington and the homosexual Lytton Strachey, with whom she was passionately in love and with whom she shared a house in the country, had weekend visitors, she would watch at bedtime from the garden until all the upstairs lights had gone off and on again and then off again so that she could have a rough floor plan of who was sleeping with whom of whichever sex. Lady Sackville, Vita's mother, had suffered no loss of station because she was the illegitimate child of an earlier Lord Sackville or through the protracted residence at Knole of a wealthy admirer whose happy participation in the Sackville family life did a great deal to ease the financial strains of the costly household. She was not only informed but also busily kept others informed of her daughter's exotic elopement with Violet Keppel, daughter of Edward

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VII's favorite mistress, and she was scarcely ignorant of Vita's transvestite excursions in London and on the Continent in the role of "Julian," a young wounded war veteran. When Lady Sackville attempted, as she unsuccessfully did, to persuade Vita to give up Violet and return to her husband, Harold Nicolson, and to their two small sons, it was not because she was shocked by Vita's desertion of her family or by her liaison within her own sex —– the lesbian preference was only curious —– or because she thought that a husband, even a husband who, like Harold Nicolson, was himself homosexual, had a claim on his wife or that children had need of their mothers. Simply, she was worried that the newspapers might get the story and make Vita's escapade a matter of public discussion rather than what it miraculously remained, a subject of private titillation within her own class. Apparently the worst, the one really bad thing that could happen to a Sackville, as to Virginia Woolf, was exposure to the judgment of ordinary persons.

Portrait of a Marriage turns out to be a fascinating extended footnote to British upper-class habits and advantages. But this is inadvertent. Mr. Nicolson gives no sign of having any greater awareness of the uncommon nature of the social authority his mother could bring to her sexual desires than of the complex emotional requirements which were served in Vita and Harold's marital arrangements or those of Violet and the man she eventually married, Denys Trefusis. Surely had he been conscious of how different the situation would have been if Vita, with her homosexual urgency, had been trapped in the conventions of middle-class marriage, he could not have made his pious appeal to our (presumed) present-day tolerance, portraying his mother as a pioneer of the freedom which is now supposedly available to all of us and implying that it asked merely the passage of time for her conduct to be countenanced more readily than it was in her lifetime. Vita's sexual behavior was thoroughly countenanced in her lifetime. It could not have been more so, short of holding parades in her honor. She suffered no iota of social or economic pain because of it. True, it is now permissible as it would not have been in Edwardian England to publish a book about one's parents' sexual deviations. Yet it is in our own enlightened day that an English sexual scandal, the Profumo case, cost Profumo his career and Stephen Ward his life. One's English friends protest that Profumo was discredited and disgraced not by his sexual behavior but solely by his lie in the House, but Ward was a chiropractor, he had no public office in which to lie or not lie, and yet the censure directed to him was so harsh that he was unable to sustain existence. Objectively measured, there may of course have been insufficient ground for the ultimate fear or shame

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which drove Ward to suicide; but by the measure of his own middle-class morality there was obviously ground enough.

In Mr. Nicolson's re-creation of his parents' marriage the middle class with its cruel moral judgments, its duties, its demands and exigencies, its cautions and its limitations on freedom is only an offstage rumble. Harold and Vita Nicolson had a family word for the way life is lived on a level lower than their own: they called it "bedint" —— the very sound is ugly —— and their joint eschewal of everything which smacked of the bedint undoubtedly helped cement their remarkable alliance. Knole with its 365 rooms was manifestly not bedint. Their own more modest establishment, Long Barn, in which they could manage with the help of only three indoor and two outdoor servants, was not bedint. Sissinghurst Castle, a later residence —— it was here, in Vita's tower retreat, that after her death Nigel Nicolson found his mother's Byronic record of the affair with Violet which, together with family letters and diaries, makes the basis of his narrative —— was not bedint. The famous Sissinghurst gardens which Vita and Harold designed together and which Vita executed with no small skill and effort were anything but bedint. Least of all were the Nicolsons' marital contrivances bedint, or the rearing of their sons. It may have been impossible for Vita to mask her restiveness when the children were brought to her for their daily audience but she had the substantial virtue of never being worn and irascible like a bedint mother with the wash still to do and supper to get, and —— so Nigel tells us —— there was always Harold to be genuinely interested in the boys when, having exchanged diplomacy for a literary career in London, Harold was able to come home with fair regularity for weekends; for the rest the children had their nannies, their games, their Eton, and they even had their Granny. It was Granny Sackville, indeed, who told Ben, older of the two boys, about his mother's affair with Violet Trefusis —— this was when Ben was sixteen. From Nigel Nicolson's description of the episode it is hard to say whether Lady Sackville was being vicious, senile, or just making the small talk of her set.

With *Portrait of a Marriage* pursuing its conspicuous way in America one hears the relation of Vita and Harold Nicolson celebrated as a triumph of bisexuality. Actually it was bisexual only in its short first years when the children were being produced; once the family was established Vita and Harold made no pretense of sexual interest in each other. Their nonsexual devotion nevertheless steadily grew, increasing in intensity virtually in proportion to their sexual distance from each other and to their conscientious disregard of each other's extramarital activity —— and we gather from Nigel Nicolson's account that their extramarital

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ventures, with the single exception of Vita's passing involvement with Geoffrey Scott, author of the widely praised *Architecture of Humanism*, were always for each of them homosexual. Far more than it was a phenomenon of bisexuality, the marriage was an example of the supremacy of friendship between the sexes over sex between the sexes —— and this, I suspect, is why Mr. Nicolson's book is so attractive to the present-day public, especially an American public. From Freud, that most bedint of psychologists bred in middle-class Vienna, Americans have for some years now learned that a properly ongoing marriage is built upon the kind of love which is nurtured in, also expressed in, sexuality, "mature" (i.e., reciprocally genital) sexuality. Fundamental to marriage, in the Freudian view, is sexual fidelity; where fidelity breaks down, neurosis is believed to have taken over. More recently, however, this imperative of an invigorating monogamy has lost much of its force as a troubling ideal of marital health. In fact, our American post-Freudian culture is in many ways coming to resemble the still-ruling pre-Freudian culture of England, a country whose personal choices continue to be largely determined by a class in which the arrangement of family life meets few of the conditions which Freud took for granted. Not only for the American young or for the consciously "free" but for many classes of Americans, even, one is told, in solid suburbia, the assumption that love is exclusive, like the idea that it is limited to persons of opposite gender and is properly rooted in "normal" appetites, loses the reassuring grip it was once thought to have on the imagination. It constitutes no new or radical insight to recognize that if sex makes the foundation of a marriage and something goes wrong sexually between a husband and wife, perhaps only that they no longer have mystery for one another, inevitably the whole of the relation is damaged; what Mr. Nicolson's book provides is welcome evidence that sex and love do not necessarily even combine, let alone bolster each other. In any culture at any time a relation such as existed between Mr. Nicolson's parents, the enduring affection and respect and sympathy they had for each other, would represent a rare attainment; and it is understandable that at the present time, when we try to persuade ourselves that there are fresh and lasting solutions for old woes in all departments of life, we should regard the success they made of their marriage as containing a generally applicable lesson. Certainly in Vita and Harold's situation, in which both the husband and the wife were predominantly homosexual, the elimination of sex from the relation provided not just a first but an absolute condition of their enduring peace and happiness. But the sexlessness of the marriage was also what it seldom, if ever, could be in the marriage of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

two heterosexuals or even of one heterosexual and one homosexual: it was a *possible* condition of enduring peace and pleasure.

It is a shortcoming of *Portrait of a Marriage* that Mr. Nicolson makes it almost wholly Vita's story and that he glides all too smoothly over his father's sexual history both before and during the marriage. This leaves many questions unanswered, among them the interesting one of why Harold was impelled to marriage in the first place, and committed to it, once Vita had become his wife, to the extent of wanting to win her back from Violet. Harold and Vita were married and parents when Vita eloped with the woman to whom she had already been attached in girlhood. If Harold had married only in order to perpetuate the line, this had now been accomplished; he no longer had need of a wife for purposes of procreation. But so simplistic a view of what moved him, while it offers the quickest explanation of why an active homosexual would wish to marry, conforms not at all to Mr. Nicolson's account of Harold's need to keep the marriage from breaking up. Mr. Nicolson quotes extensively from his father's correspondence with Vita during the period of greatest threat to the marriage: although Harold's pleas to Vita to come back to him are rather more literary (even in their self-pity) than impassioned, they at least arrived in a steady stream and they are bafflingly uncynical; they sound no slightest note of sexual slyness or collusion such as one might expect in a communication from one admitted homosexual to another. They are the letters of a person who, although uncertain of his right to his marriage, unmistakably wants it, and on unchanged terms.

Then there is Violet to be explained, and her relationship with Denys Trefusis or, rather, his to her, and Vita's response to *their* marriage. Violet had no impulse to be wed but both she and Vita, in the fashion of well-placed young heroines of nineteenth-century fiction, recognized that, as Vita put it, "she would gain more liberty by marrying." (Though how she could use more liberty than she already had, it is hard to say.) Denys's motive in wanting to marry Violet, on the other hand, had no such time-honored social-economic source. For reasons which Mr. Nicolson doesn't undertake to explore, Denys was a self–entrapped prisoner of the perverse circumstance: the more Violet was given to Vita, the more he was determined to capture her; he went so far, in fact, as to vow never to claim his conjugal rights. Once Violet actually became his wife, Denys broke this promise or very likely only attempted to, probably only once and with Violet's encouragement. At any rate, the gross imposition was reported to Vita by Harold; it was his champion stroke in getting back his wife: Vita, who had never been touched with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sexual jealousy in her relation with Harold, was seized with a jealousy so acute as to amount to revulsion —— the news put an effective end to her attraction to Violet. As for the erring husband, Denys apparently had other requirements than to persist in his marital transgression; we are not told what they were although we are told that the Trefusis's marriage, despite the strength of feeling which had made it so compulsory for Denys, Violet's hesitations driving him near to madness, turned out to be not at all of the same affectional order as that of the Nicolsons. And thereby hangs, of course, a strange text for these times of our confusion: while it may indeed be that sex is a primary cause of marital incompatibility, it takes more than the abandonment of sex to ensure love between a man and woman.

The story of an aristocratic bohemia which seems no longer to exist, or not with anything of its old arrogance and flourish, *Portrait of a Marriage* is also a useful if unintended guide to English habits of feeling which have managed to survive extreme shifts in the political climate of the nation and which in fact cut across class lines although announcing themselves most clearly where class privilege is most marked. In America, for instance, it would be difficult even today to imagine a writer, even an "advanced" writer, being as forthright and unashamed about his own father's homosexuality as Mr. Nicolson is about the homosexuality of Harold Nicolson —— we have no books in this country like J. R. Ackerley's fascinating *My Father and Myself*. This is because Americans, unlike the British, have until now always regarded homosexuality as a monolithic pathology, a bourn from which no man returns to woman. Were the British to share this view, what with the traditional early and long separation of the sexes in school and the consequent restriction of early sexual activity to members of one's own sex, there would surely be no England. It would also push our famous American permissiveness farther than it is yet prepared to go for a respectable middle-class publisher–author to delve as publicly as Mr. Nicolson does into the sexual deviations of his own parents. In England, too, Mr. Nicolson's revelations about his parents have not been entirely immune to disapproval. But in general criticism has been addressed not so much to Mr. Nicolson's acceptance of his parents' sexual digressions as to his intrusion into their privacy: what would not be the case here, it is regarded in England as almost as unmannerly to speak so openly about normal as about abnormal intimacies, whether it is a case of a schoolfellow or of one's own mother or father. This is a quintessential difference in national character: for the English still, as for Lady Sackville, it is not what one does which matters; what matters is to keep what one does to oneself or to one's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

own kind. A corollary — or perhaps it is causal — of the English emphasis on privacy is the extraordinary inwardness of the English people, what David Riesman might have called their inner-directedness were its origin not so clearly "other," arising from the old well-defined class structure of English society and perhaps primarily from an imperialism which demanded that one have the inner strength, principle, conviction, resource to maintain power among strangers. No American reader can fail to remark in *Portrait of a Marriage* what to the English reader is probably as unnoteworthy as Mr. Nicolson's comfortable use of his own language: his cool detachment from these parents whom he professes to have loved very much and whom he no doubt did love sincerely. In America, at any rate until recently, love as detached, as seemingly impersonal and remote as this would at once be spotted for an emotional insufficiency; it would be isolated as a symptom, blamed on Mr. Nicolson's upbringing, on the distance at which he had been kept from his parents, his reliance upon nannies for his early education in responsiveness, even upon his traumatic discovery of his parents' unsanctified sexual tastes. The English have no such diagnostic fervor nor do they prize, as Americans do, a life of expressed feeling, of emotion always on the boil. But they have a not negligible alternative for easily accessible personal emotion: a sense of self, a definition of self, which Americans do not casually come by.

The point perhaps needs to be made: there is considerable difference between self-definition and self-love. Anyone so masochistic as to wish to pursue the distinction is recommended to turn from Mr. Nicolson's book about how his parents lived together to another current story of a real-life marriage, Hannah Tillich's account of her own and her dead husband's psychoerotic personal histories — the presence in the pages of *From Time to Time* of a second, rather better-known Tillich than its author does nothing to save it from being as narcissistic a document as has come from the pen of woman in this century and I include in my grim survey such notable efforts in self-adulation and self–aggrandizement as the diaries of Anais Nin, the autobiography of Isadora Duncan, Frieda Lawrence's *Not I, But the Wind*, and the multivolumed memories of Mabel Dodge Luhan. The conjunction of these literary productions with that of Mrs. Tillich should not, I hasten to make plain, be taken to imply that *From Time to Time* in any degree approximates any of them even in personal interest let alone in cultural-historical usefulness. One of the amazing achievements of Mrs. Tillich's book is the ability of its author to have reached maturity in her native Germany during the extraordinary years between World War I and the triumph of Nazism and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

yet to write about the experience in such a way that it adds no single significant cultural detail to the instruction we take from —— say —— the movie *Cabaret*. Only less momentous is Mrs. Tillich's capacity to have been associated, as the wife of the eminent German-American theologian, Paul Tillich, with some of the best minds of our century and yet write like this:

> Although Carl's breath was foul, nobody minded. Lotte and I loved his spiritual being. When he described to us in detail his sexual relationship with another girl, whom we knew, we drank it in as the message of one poet to another. Carl read us innumerable poems of cosmic import. He put one of my poetic images into one of them, on the assumption that I would be proud to give *him* something of *my* imagination. I was. Once, I wrote twelve poems about a cosmic couple and their individuation. Carl read it and sighed —— he could never finish anything.

The passage is typical.

As to the sex life of Hannah Tillich apart from her marriage to Paul or Paulus, as he apparently was called, or of Paulus apart from Hannah, or of the two of them together, Mrs. Tillich would have us know (what other purpose has her book, indeed?) that it was most untheologically varied, orgiastic, sublime, and sordid; among its features she includes her husband's practice, at least in his late years, of projecting on a screen in his home large pictures of naked girls being whipped on the Cross. Perhaps with the appearance of Mr. Nicolson's *Portrait of a Marriage* and Mrs. Tillich's *From Time to Time* a new category of nonfiction has been born: confessions on behalf of someone else, preferably perverse and dead. If so, may we be lucky enough to be given our revelations, as in the Nicolson instance, unembellished by poetical aspiration and specious sensibility.

Diana Trilling

PRIX L'AGE D'OR

In homage to the celebrated film by Luis Buñuel, the Royal Film Archive of Brussels has created the L'Age d'Or Prize, amounting to 100.000 BF. This Prize is to be given each year to a fictional film whose inventive and cinematographic qualities show evidence of a free-thinking and subversive spirit, comparable, for our time, with Buñuel's in 1930.

Royal Film Archive of Belgium
Palais des Beaux-Arts / Ravenstein 23 / 1000 Brussels

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE POLITICS OF THE FUTURE

THE COMING OF POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY: A VENTURE IN SOCIAL FORECASTING. By Daniel Bell. Basic Books. $12.50.

Daniel Bell is among the most knowledgeable and sophisticated commentators on the contemporary scene, and no product of his incisive mind is without interest. He has published a series of searching essays in recent years (some of them are incorporated in this book), which further whetted one's appetite for this major work. I am bound to confess, however, that I find the book disappointing. I have profited from many of its specific ideas, but cannot but register the conclusion that its major thesis remains unproven and carries little conviction.

This is a sprawling, repetitive, prolix, and badly organized work, an olla podrida in which Bell delivers himself of opinions and arguments on an amazing variety of topics. It is a pity that he did not have the time to write a shorter book. As it is, much of what he has to say is indeed illuminating, but the whole, alas, does not partake of the excellence of some of its parts.

Bell's overall thesis is rooted in the assertion that the old structure of corporate capitalism is rapidly decaying and is about to be replaced by a new "knowledge-based society" in which the professional and technical classes will have preeminence and in which "intellectual technology" and theoretical knowledge will have pride of place. As American society moves from a goods-producing to a service economy, expertise and knowledge will serve as a prepotent source of societal power.

Bell is at pains to assert over and over again that he is not a technological determinist like the Saint-Simonians and that politics and culture do not necessarily reflect technological trends. Yet in concrete fact he nevertheless concludes that the "axial institution" that will shape post-industrial society is the theoretical knowledge of scientists and engineers in universities and research laboratories. But what is a powerful "axial institution" that carries no political clout? Throughout the book Bell wrestles with the ghost of Saint-Simon. But the ghost, alas, seems most of the time to win the battle.

Scientists and engineers, Bell argues, will impress their distinctive stamp on post-industrial society, much as Schumpeterian entrepreneurs constituted the central dynamic element in classical capitalism. But why should this be so? Here Bell seems to argue from the twin grounds of numbers and indispensability. He shows that white-collar workers are now considerably more numerous than blue-collar workers, and that professional, technical, and kindred workers, a relatively small category under classical capitalism, now number over ten million, that is con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stitute over 12 percent of the total labor force, and will continue to grow in the future. They are "the heart of the post-industrial society" because they are indispensable to its functioning.

I find both arguments less than convincing. Blue-collar workers in manufacturing surely constituted the single largest category of all workers in industrial society, and they evidently were indispensable to its operation, yet Bell would be the first to recognize that they were at no time the master class. If indispensability were really a source of societal power, sanitation workers or baby sitters would be a formidable social and political force. They never were and never will be because indispensability results in societal power only if and when it is accompanied by a self-conscious will to act in common for shared supraoccupational objectives. And such self-consciousness, in turn, emerges only under specific structural conditions. When Marx discussed the French peasantry around the middle of the nineteenth century, which then was, of course, a large majority of the French population, he asserted that the conditions of their existence were such that they could not form common bonds and a common consciousness, that they were like "potatoes in a sack" rather than a solidary collectivity that could put its stamp on society.

Bell furnishes no evidence whatsoever that knowledge has replaced property as the main source of power. He only shows that modern society increasingly depends on the activities of scientists, educators, engineers, social workers, technologists, and researchers, and simply assumes that they are therefore our new masters. He never seems seriously to entertain the notion that the employers and funding agencies, both public and private, who employ them or contract for their work, may in fact direct their activities much more than they themselves are directed by them. One need not hold the vulgar notion that he who pays the piper always calls the tune, to remain skeptical of the notion that the knowledge "estates" are gaining ascendancy because we all depend on them as resources.

The notion of power remains unclarified in Bell's book. The word is not even found in the index, despite the fact that the whole argument of the work revolves around it. At one point the author states that "corporate power . . . is the predominant power in the society." But elsewhere he argues: "In the post-industrial society, technical skill becomes the base of and education the mode of access to power; those (or the elite of the group) who come to the fore in this fashion are the scientists." According to one scheme power rests in the executive suite, according to the other in the faculty club. Bell surely cannot have it both ways, and no amount of intellectual fireworks can hide the fact that he has not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

really thought through his main argument. The knowledge-makers may conceivably help improve the policy choices of the decision-makers, but they do not themselves make these choices. The notion of Scientist-Kings is as far-fetched today as it was in Saint-Simon's days. The Saint-Simonians built many of Louis Napoleon's railroads and canals, but they did not dislodge him and his banker-financiers from the house of power.

The character of politics in post-industrial society remains as nebulous as the character of power. We are told that "the politics of the future . . . will not be quarrels between functional economic-interest groups for distributive shares of the national product, but the concerns of communal society." Politics will turn upon such issues as greater public amenities, a better quality of life, and assorted improvements in the character of our culture. But we are also told that "the control system of the society is lodged not in a successor-occupational class but in the political order, and the question of who manages the political order is an open one," since the knowledge class need not necessarily become a new political class. This amounts to saying that though Bell knows already what the political issues of the future will be, he has no idea who will control the levers of politics. Notwithstanding all that uncertainty he is yet certain that, "the scientific estate . . . is the monad that contains within itself the image of the future society."

Public opinion pollers have often found that people belonging to occupational categories, be they plumbers or surgeons, tend to overestimate the power and prestige of their occupations; they claim higher standing for it than others are willing to concede. Bell seems to have fallen victim to the same conceit. How else is one to explain that this university professor can say that, "The University, which once reflected the status system of the society, has now become the arbiter of class position. As the gatekeeper, it has gained a quasi-monopoly in determining the future stratification of the society." I know of no better example of professorial hubris.

Let me reiterate that this book abounds in superb observations on an amazing variety of topics. This is a work that will be around for quite a while. But it is hard indeed to fully appreciate its many peripheral insights when the center plainly does not hold. Many years ago, when discussing Mills's *Power Elite,* Bell argued that it was "a book which discusses power, but rarely politics. And this is curious, indeed." But *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* does not discuss politics, nor does it elucidate power. And this is even more curious.

Lewis A. Coser

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wright Morris

FIELD OF VISION
"Brilliantly climaxes [Morris's] most richly creative period...a work of permanent significance and relevance"—John W. Aldridge. Pa **$2.95**

MAN AND BOY
A serio-comic tale of part of a day in the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Ormsby, Pfc. Lipido, Mrs. Dinardo and some bewildered officers of the U.S. Navy, by "one of the most truly original of contemporary writers"—Granville Hicks. Pa **$2.25**

CEREMONY IN LONE TREE
"A modern classic (1959) and should be rediscovered now that it's in paper, especially by the literate young and city-bound"—*Publishers' Weekly.* Pa **$2.75**

THE WORKS OF LOVE
Internalizing the isolation, the loneliness, the emptiness of what Morris calls the "Nebraska experience," this book is the first fruit of his efforts to recapture his past. Pa **$1.95**

THE WORLD IN THE ATTIC
The concluding volume of the author's "Nebraska trilogy" mingles childhood memories with the collective memories of the pioneer American past. Pa **$1.95**

THE HOME PLACE
Brings back into print an important early work by the winner of a 1956 National Book Award. "Recommended as a fine piece of Americana"—*Library Journal.* Pa **$1.95**

At bookstores or from UNP

University of Nebraska Press
Lincoln 68508
UNP

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CITY LIGHTS

THE COUNTRY AND THE CITY. By Raymond Williams. Oxford University Press. $9.75.

CITIES OF LIGHT AND SONS OF THE MORNING. By Martin Green. Little, Brown and Company. $15.00.

It is a work-song, Raymond Williams observes of Herrick's little seventeenth-century country poem *The Hock-Cart*, but it "is that special kind of work-song, addressed to the work of others." And he goes on to blast its embarrassing, patrician blindness to the actual misery of country workers, cut and ragged victims as he sees them of an indifferent, many-edged economy. Or again, describing a rebellious wheelwright facing down magistrates in 1830, he interrupts his own account abruptly — "Violence solves nothing? Submission solved nothing either." To his familiar strengths of subtlety and concreteness, as these sentences may suggest, Williams has added in *The Country and the City* a new tone of impatient, personal anger and also an autobiographical context for his anger: "I have heard my grandfather talk of the 'labourer's supper,' " he writes, "with what seemed to me then as now an understandable pride: a rabbit knocked off behind the hedge, a swede [rutabaga] knocked off at the edge of the path: a meal for eight children. If there are any now ready to mourn the loss of a country way of life, let them mourn the 'poachers' who were caught and savagely punished, until a different and urban conscience exerted some controls. Or if there are any who wish to attack those who destroyed country customs, let them attack the thieves who made the finding of food into theft." Again and again in the course of this long, remarkable survey of English history he recurs as he has not before to his own experiences for evidence, to his boyhood and to his father's and grandfather's lives, to his present life as scholar and socialist, even to his daily entry into Cambridge (a city in several senses) from the flat East Anglia country. The anger that converges from all these directions is aimed chiefly at the hobbled consciousness of English writers, past and present, who failed, as Herrick did, to see the social realities of the countryside around them; but Williams concludes with a more generalized anger at the forces creating the present crisis of cities and countries and with, if one may say so, a rather urbane call for revolution. The book that results is at once polemical and academic, ultimately a moving if not quite a stirring cultural history.

Martin Green's *Cities of Light and Sons of the Morning* also sets out to analyze historical cities and the political revolutions they have nourished or disarmed, and he too centers his account around the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dilemma of an English teacher cursed with a sense of relevance. But in sad contrast to Williams's genuine historical engagement, Green's forays into cultural psychology are, as Jay Gatsby put it, "merely personal." At the outset he describes three categories of temperament (Faustian, Erasmian, Calvinist), then relentlessly imposes them upon a random, unchronological sequence of both men and cities —— Norman Mailer's New York, for example, Goethe's Weimar, Castro's Havana. His autobiographical chapters, like his presentations of cities, survey only books and readings; nowhere does his sense of subject include aspects of life beyond his categories or beyond literary culture —— the impressions of *things* (a word Green uses simply as an abstraction) are missing entirely from a book about cities. In his vision there are no buildings, factories, stones, or smoke, no artifacts of urbanity at all, only sketchy collections of temperament.

Raymond Williams also begins with books and universities, but as he looks quickly at first classical, then Renaissance versions of pastoral poetry, it becomes plain that one major target of his castigation is to be just such an incomplete idea of literature as Green represents. "It is time this bluff was called," he says roughly of academics who admire uncritically a poem like Ben Jonson's *To Penshurst.* Renaissance pastoral excises the "living tensions" between pain and pleasure, loss and contentment found in Greek and Roman poets, "until there is nothing countervailing, and selected images stand as themselves: not in a living but in an enamelled world." In his contempt for the ornamental nymphs and dryads of this enameled world, Williams can remind us of an earlier critic's scorn for the untruthfulness of pastoral: in the "long train of mythological imagery, such as a College easily supplies," wrote Samuel Johnson of *Lycidas,* there is "no nature, for there is no truth." "Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief." Like Johnson, Williams establishes his judgments of literature in this book primarily upon its truthfulness, by which he seems to mean its willingness to include the harsh facts of what the country was really like. Phrases like "the real record," "the real connections," "the true history," "what in fact happened" pepper his book, forming a sometimes savage counterpull to the irresponsibilities of vitiated or academic literature. A quarrelsome compassion enters his estimates of writers like Robert Bloomfield, an early nineteenth-century farmboy and cobbler whose talents were frustrated by genteel standards. And in tracing the dissolution of pastoral falsifications from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries he somewhat defiantly builds up a special tradition in English literature, a pantheon that includes Bloomfield, Stephen Duck, the "thresher poet,"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

George Crabbe, William Cobbett, John Clare, Thomas Hardy, Fred Kitchen — truthtellers who gradually bring the laboring poor into the landscape, then into the life of their writings. His villains are canonical poets like Ben Jonson and Pope, novelists like Jane Austen, who accept the "illusions" of their kind of writing and who exclude from their visions all except the wealthy classes.

There are obvious drawbacks to such an approach, of course. Although Williams's verdicts are determined by the extent to which writers tell the truth as he understands it, the extent to which their fictions ratify their grief, a specialist in Renaissance literature would find his summary unacceptable; so far as it ignores a great deal of morose and cankered Renaissance pastoral, he might even find it untruthful. And an ordinary reader may wonder if Williams's anger blinds him to literature's other uses. The standards of journalism are not always those of poetry; fictions are not always false. In the background is Lionel Trilling's famous attack on the limitations of one kind of literary realism, where ideas count for nothing and where "reality is always material reality, hard, resistant, unformed, impenetrable, and unpleasant."

Yet Williams rarely falls into the trap of confusing simple unpleasantness and realism. He is saved from it in part by his own complex responses to literature which cut through ideology, in part by his interest in describing the literature of the city as well as the country. His title suggests the opposition of the two, but his argument urges us to see them as interacting and finally, in one sense, as identical. It is misleading, he claims, to understand the country as settled, peaceful, "natural" and the city as a chaotic furnace for industrialism: both city and country work together as unknowing agents of a larger system, which he calls agrarian capitalism and which exploits its elements equally. Those periods in a life or in a national history when we look back to a golden age are only moments of special stress, for the modes of production and distribution that we call characteristically urban began and persist in the rural economy: "What the oil companies do, what the mining companies do, is what the landlords did, what plantation owners did and do." The great service of the city, however, unencumbered by a pastoral tradition, undistracted by natural beauty, has been to allow an expansion of consciousness — its massive, astonishing squalor *forces* us to perceive the distortions of social life that capitalism produces.

Williams begins his discussion of English cities with Blake and Wordsworth, because in them he finds the first expression of what has come to be a modern consciousness, a feeling of disconnection, of meaninglessness that we now call alienation. Against this view he places

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dickens's vision of London, the first step in English literature toward thwarting our urban disconnections. "As we stand and look back at a Dickens novel," he writes in a brilliant chapter, "the general movement we remember — the characteristic movement — is a hurrying seemingly random passing of men and women, each heard in some fixed phrase, seen in some fixed expression: a way of seeing men and women that belongs to the street. There is at first an absence of ordinary connection and development. . . . But then as the action develops, unknown and unacknowledged relationships, profound and decisive connections, definite and committing recognitions and avowals are as it were forced into consciousness. These are the real and inevitable relationships and connections, the necessary recognitions and avowals of any human society. But they are of a kind that are obscured, complicated, mystified, by the sheer rush and noise and miscellaneity of this new and complex social order." Classical visions of the disordered city, according to Williams, whether in Juvenal or in Revelation, are seen from above; what is new in the modern consciousness is the inner view of the city, the perspective from within the wasteland upon its democratic despair, its meaninglessness and exploitation. Dickens's buried community, slowly excavated by the energy of his plots, begins the city's swing toward its

MANDELSTAM

CLARENCE BROWN

Here is as complete a story as is ever likely to be told about the early years of the great Russian poet who died in a labor camp in 1938. Professor Brown writes engagingly and sensitively of the boy and the emerging poet in the intellectual world of pre-revolutionary St. Petersburg. He quotes the poetry in Russian and in English translation, supplying full and thoughtful criticism.

". . . blazes a trail over new territory . . . knowledgeable, closely reasoned, highly intelligent, well written." — *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

"Clarence Brown produces a wealth of material which is bound to correct past errors in the interpretation of Mandelstam and facilitate further exegesis." — *The New Republic*

Illustrated with 14 photographs. $13.95

Cambridge University Press

32 East 57th Street New York, N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"two great and transforming modern ideas: myth, in its variable forms; revolution, in its variable forms." Jung's sense of a collective unconscious only extends and systematizes the sense of community that begins in our reaction to life among crowds of strangers. Revolution certifies our recognition that capitalism alone oppresses us.

In the latter part of the book Williams goes far past the conventional list of writers who contribute in one way or another to his theme —— past the poetry of Eliot and Pound, the country-house novels of Evelyn Waugh and George Meredith —— to absorb a second range of literary experiences. Urban detective stories he sees as significant attempts to reduce the city's intricacies to order, to explore all levels of social relationship through the "opaque complexity" of crime. Contemporary science fiction permits us to experiment in the security of the future, creating (and destroying) every possible kind of city on every possible kind of planet. And novelists of the "developing nations" like Kenya, India, Malaya, if we read them correctly, are now reenacting phases of European and American urban history in illuminating ways.

It is in his two concluding chapters that Williams returns openly, as it seems to me, to the theme of unity and disunity that has all along shaped the book. For city and country, he holds, although victims of the same system, are at bottom divided and opposed as images in our minds because they represent the largest point in scale at which capitalism requires division of human life: city and country are false divisions of labor, and false divisions of experience. "What we have finally to say is that we live in a world in which the dominant mode of production and social relationships teaches, impresses, offers to make normal and even rigid, modes of detached, separated, external perception and action: modes of using and consuming rather than accepting and enjoying people and things. . . . It is not so much the old village or the old backstreet that is significant. It is the perception and affirmation of a world in which one is not necessarily a stranger and an agent, but can be a member, a discoverer, in a shared source of life." Perhaps one may be forgiven for feeling that his eloquence at this point begins at least partly to falter. The deep anger that the book conveys now appears to tap more a personal than a moral vein, the language turns toward bureaucratic abstractions. What he seems so alert to elsewhere, the temptation to make the unity of our childhood (anyone's childhood) into a political order, for once eludes him. Autobiography and analysis slip out of balance. He asks what anyone asks, a sense of membership, of acceptance, of "a shared source of life." But there will be many readers who will hesitate to expect this warm and reassuring community from "new forms of decision-making,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new kinds of education, new definitions and practices of work, new kinds of settlement and land-use." Or at least from these alone. A certain insoluble separation from other people and other things, a certain fragmentation of time and relation may be what all of us are doomed to feel, not only as consumers and capitalists but also as citizens of what one Renaissance poet (whom Williams does not mention) called the "bank and shoal of time." At the end Williams reverts to a vision of renewal in itself pastoral, one that springs from an acknowledged sense of loss. But he leaves unexamined his own somewhat enameled hope that the inevitable processes of time, both personal and historical, can be reversed and that we can return to that remote condition when country and city were as close as self and family.

Max Byrd

IN

OUT. By Ronald Sukenick. Swallow Press. $7.95.

It's a movie!
It's a (comic) book!
It's a message!
It's a novel!
This is it! When ya gotta go ya gotta go!
It's better than *MAD MAGAZINE!* It's far OUT!
It's got speed! It's all screwed up! It's way OUT!
It's slapstick!
It's mad!
This is it! It's *OUT* by Ron Sukenick!
It's a countdown!
Everybody's got his stick —— his stick of dynamite! Watch OUT!
It's going to blow up!
Let's have a meet! QUICK! Hey you guys!
Let's get OUT there!
Let's speed OUT! When ya gotta go ya gotta go!
All the way OUT!
From the Lower East Side To California! QUICK!
Through Ohio, Iowa, South Dakota, Wyoming, Las Vegas! Full speed!
All the way OUT! (You bunch of Wasichus!)
This is "a translation in Lakota!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's incredible! It's a book that erases all books!
It's a holdup! It's a crash out! Stop everything I'm getting OUT!
It's a novel —— *OUT* —— by Ron Sukenick (Swallow Press, Chicago, 1973).
It's *OUT!* Hey, you guys OUT there, go get it! Full speed!
Now some novels are written in anger.
Others in anguish.
And others in a state of tranquillity and reflectiveness.
Usually,
these types of novels merely represent (as best they can) the author's perception of certain occasions which, supposedly, occurred in some distant historical, social, or psychic past, and, as such, are efforts to make sense out of those occasions —— efforts to arrange rearrange organize reorganize the past into a coherent and credible story. *OUT* (this is it —— by Ronald Sukenick) is written in stubbornness. *Out* is a stubborn novel —— a deliberately stubborn novel which refuses to conform (especially in tone and syntax) to any predetermined notions of what fiction usually does.
Those angry, anguished, tranquil, reflective novels
usually
invent for themselves, in order to progress, a fake temporal
space in which to suspend the dumb reader's disbelief.
OUT is incredible! It knocks you OUT with disbelief!
It's a stubborn novel. It progresses with total disregard for credibility, and with a kind of determination that negates the logic of continuity because "when ya gotta go ya gotta go," and here anything goes! Those novels written in a state of anger, anguish, or serene reflectiveness perpetuate their fake fiction along the lines (the straight lines) of a temporal dimension which allow the elements of the story to be organized in a meaningful manner.

OUT stubbornly refuses to make sense —— to make sense out of itself, and out of the past. Indeed, as one of the characters in the story says of his own unpredictable predicament: "It makes deep nonsense of my trivial sense."
Stubbornness, in fact, rejects the possibility of reflective perception. If one reflects; logically, calmly, obediently, reasonably, on one's course of action, then it is not possible to be stubborn about it. Or, as my *WEBSTER* tells me: to be stubborn is to be "unreasonably obstinate, obstinately perverse"; to be stubborn is to "obstinately maintain a course of action." The guy who wrote the *WEBSTER* must have read

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OUT. Or at least must have been OUT there! Because *OUT* (by Ron Sukenick) is the most obstinate, the most perverse, the most unreasonable story I've ever read. It obstinately maintains its (hopeless, perverse, hilarious) course of action without ever looking back at its point of departure. It progresses with total disregard for coherence and credibility.

Stubbornness, moreover, functions outside and beyond temporal justifications. *OUT*, therefore, does not set itself in motion on the basis of an occasion which lies OUTside its fiction (in some distant place and some remote time). *OUT* is an occasion! An occasion of the present —— of the HERE and NOW! *OUT* refuses to expand, progress, move, out of the past. It refuses to project its fiction from a specific point in time. *OUT* begins in a kind of unreal present, and moves further into that unreal present, thus abolishing that temporal dimension which gives traditional fiction (the angry, anguished, tranquil novels) a fraudulent space into which it can write itself. *OUT* uses REAL space to perpetuate its contours, detours, and movements (its "plots and counterplots"). *OUT* uses the REAL space of the pages upon which it is written. *OUT* wriggles its way OUT of a closed and intricate formal pattern which has no antecedents outside of itself —— no point of departure in the past, before the book, and beyond the covers of the book. *OUT* writes itself OUT of the corner into which it has cornered itself from the beginning: "It all comes together . . . The way we deal with that is as long as everyone does his job what's the difference . . . You're either part of the plot or part of the counterplot." The fiction then sneaks OUT of the page into empty space —— blank space: the blank spaces essential to the layout of the book, blank spaces which augment in whiteness as the fiction empties itself into the blank pages at the end of the book. Or, as Sukenick (not the author, but the mythic character in the novel) tells us: "I want to write a book like a cloud that changes as it goes."

This is it! *OUT* is a CLOUD!

OUT, then, stubbornly goes OUT of itself. Empties itself rather than fulfills itself (like most novels). Rather than augmenting as it progresses, rather than establishing its purpose with each new sentence, each new paragraph, each new page, and with each additional complication (as is the case with most traditional fiction), *OUT* juggles away its purpose and its complications. *OUT* improvises its events and occasions before the reader's eyes, and does so by using techniques of the movies, the comic strips, the slapsticks, as it is explicitly stated in the pages of the fiction: "Wake up. Everything up to here has been a movie." Or, further on:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Our lives are an appalling slapstick. On the other side of the TV screen real blood flows."

Obviously, then, *OUT* makes a shamble of traditional fiction. It brings fiction to the brink of playful disaster. As such, *OUT* is a remarkable piece of fiction —— a tour de force —— because it fucks up all preconceived notions of what fiction should be. *OUT* fucks up the whole conventional way of reading a story. And above all, *OUT* fucks up the English language. No one, as far as I know, as yet so successfully, so brilliantly, so deliberately messed up the English syntax. *OUT* is written in a most unpredictable syntax: half-finished sentences run into other half-finished sentences to make new unfinished sentences: "the rumpus room picture windows on both sides leather armchair card table foldup ping pong table this is where we store the bicycles here's the bar that's the galley the bridge is up ahead captain's quarters two TVs one here one in the crew's quarters aft are you a veteran." The punctuation dances among the words and the words bounce between the white space. It's beautiful to look at. It moves all over the place. It's full of energy! Full of surprises!
When ya gotta go this is the way to go!
And yet the novel is readable, very readable. And very funny too, but unpredictable. That's for sure.

But for those who still read books (novels?) for the story, the plot, the action, the so-called dramatic development, let us sum up. *OUT* is the story of a conspiracy, a plot. And since everyone in the novel carries a stick of dynamite, everyone therefore is part of the plot (and/or the counterplot). *OUT* is also the story of a trip. It's a trip! From East to West —— from the big messy metropolis (New York, if you wish, or to be exact, Brooklyn: the El, the BMT, Coney Island, etc.) to the "blue gold orange sky" of decadent California —— by car, by van, on foot, hitchhiking, bumming rides most of the way. Therefore, lots of vehicles in that story: cars, vans, trucks, U-hauls, etc. It's a trip! Therefore, lots of grass too. Lots of joints being passed around. Lots of weirdies too! And animals —— cats, dogs, etc. Lots of screwing around, and lots of plain screwing too! In the back of vans, usually. It's a trip —— an escape from the plot, from the big city, from the present, from the burden of social life, from the illusions of reality, but since everyone is involved in the plot (or the counterplot, as you wish), there is no way OUT! No way OUT for the Kids (that's what the characters are called) who, like comic-strip figures, struggle to find their way OUT of the frames into which they have been drawn. All of them are interchangeable —— Carl becomes Nick who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

becomes Rex who becomes Tommy who becomes Roland who becomes Ron (Sukenick?) who becomes R., etc. And the girls too: Ova becomes Alma who becomes Trixie, etc. Carl gets picked up hitchhiking by a kid who tells him his name is Carl so Carl immediately tells the kid his name is Rex. No problems! Anything goes. And the fiction goes on, playing its game toward its end: point zero. But it's very serious too. For instance, for those who like mysteries, *OUT* is also full of mysterious (tragic!) events. Dynamite. Holdups. Stickups. Secret agents. Secret messages. Riots. Cops. Tear gas. Guns —— lots of guns!

But that's not all! *OUT* need not be read like an ordinary novel. It could, in fact, be read anyway you wish, starting any place you wish. And yet, one should, perhaps, respect the order of the countdown, because *OUT*, above all, is a COUNTDOWN —— from ten to zero! Ten sections in the book. Ten sections numbered backward (downward?). First section is TEN, second NINE, third EIGHT, and so on. Last section is ZERO —— it's blank. Each section is made of blocks of words (paragraphs, stanzas?). Section TEN is made of blocks of ten lines, section NINE blocks of nine lines, section EIGHT blocks of eight lines, and so on. Section ZERO is made, of course, of blocks of no lines. It's blank. As a result the language diminishes as the fiction progresses, and accelerates as it diminishes. The less words there are, the faster it goes. Between the blocks of lines, the white space augments —— lots of white space to stop, to rest, to pause, to breathe, to reflect, to look around, and even (if one wishes) to scribble one's own fiction. *OUT* moves along faster and faster, blanker and blanker, toward its inevitable End/Zero! Toward blankness, whiteness, emptiness —— toward the end of fiction, or the beginning of a new fiction. *OUT* purifies itself into its own fictional space. Empties itself into its own blank pages. It's finished. The Kids in the story have managed to juggle themselves OUT of existence.

Unlike most traditional fiction which tells its story by starting from a point in the past (the beginning) and moves toward another point in the past (the middle) to finally reach a point closer to the present (the end), *OUT* begins in the present (at the end) and constructs itself on the spot in the present (beyond its own end). Therefore no time is spent —— just space: the space of the pages into which the fiction writes itself. The space it takes for the kids to move around, and move OUT.

It is in this nonmovement (except the movement of its pages) that *OUT* not only changes our reading habits, but also changes (improves rather) our perception of the world.

To change the level of perception one has of social reality, one must

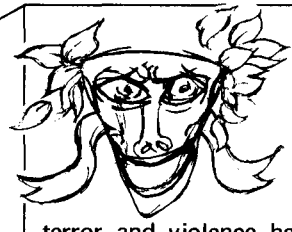
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

change the psychic mechanism which makes the writing of fiction possible. It is a matter of releasing a burst of creativity which shakes the real world (the classified world, the named world, the known world), and consequently releasing a true hallucinatory energy.

OUT releases such energy!

Indeed, if art (and I am using this useful word to designate all unfunctional activities) had as its only goal to make us see the world better, it would be nothing else but a technique of analysis, an ersatz science (and it is indeed what realistic art has been all about). But in seeking to produce the something else which is in the thing, it is an entirely new epistemology which is created. This unlimited, unrestricted work frees us of all accepted notions of hierarchy: true perception, fixed nomination, credible association. *OUT* is such a work which changes our perception of the world. *OUT* gets rid of social reality as a stable, organizable, recognizable entity. *OUT* demolishes any pretention we may have of perceiving the world as being rational, safe, and apprehensible. *OUT* helps us to get OUT. Therefore, you WASICHUS out there! Go get it! It's *OUT*, by Ron Sukenick!

Raymond Federman



COMIC TERROR

THE NOVELS OF JOHN HAWKES

by Donald J. Greiner

Dr. Greiner shows that Hawkes is primarily a comic novelist who utilizes the detatchment of humor to control the terror and violence he evokes in novels like THE CANNIBAL and SECOND SKIN.

Dr. Greiner draws on Hawkes' published interviews and criticisms to clarify both his literary technique and his uses of comedy. And through his detailed discussion of each novel, the author illustrates and analyzes the novelist's conception of fiction.

"The book is especially useful in examining Hawkes' humor in the light of traditional theories of comedy (e.g., Meredith and Bergson) and in describing the author's conscious goal of disrupting traditional fictional forms in the face of an audience demand for verisimilitude." Bert C. Bach, LIBRARY JOURNAL

260 pages, index, checklist

$7.50

Memphis State University Press

Memphis, Tennessee 38152

MEMPHIS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE ART OF GIVING

THE BIG FOUNDATIONS. By Waldemar A. Nielsen. A Twentieth Century Fund Study. Columbia University Press. $10.95.

Perhaps the most intriguing bit of incidental intelligence provided by Waldemar Nielsen's useful study, *The Big Foundations*, is to be found in the Appendix in "A Note on Foundation Investment Performance." It turns out that at best foundations do no better in the stock market than most mutual funds, and he cites another study, The Peterson Report, which suggests "that foundation performance is far inferior to market performance."

All of which raises an interesting question. Since foundation grants are really a form of social or cultural investment, why assume that foundations —— which draw their trustees and boards primarily from the financial community —— will do any better in their nonprofit investments than in their for-profit ones? As a matter of fact, based on the evidence of the Nielsen study such an assumption is totally unwarranted. "Judged on the basis of its present actual performance, private philanthropy in the United States is a sick, malfunctioning institution," concludes Nielsen. "On the basis of the record, it is difficult to insist that the public and the Congress should exert themselves excessively to defend and encourage foundations."

Foundation favorites, in descending order of the money they get, are education (frequently to alma maters), science (medical research), health (three-quarters to hospitals and schools), welfare (usually to "community funds"), and last and least, the humanities, by which is meant not writers but libraries, not artists but museums, not art but art centers. Foundations know how to endow physical facilities which commemorate things past but not mental facilities which can create *The Remembrance of Things Past.* Giving away other people's money, apparently, sounds easier than it is. Project officers find it simpler to justify a building than an idea, easier to measure quantity than quality, more congenial to ratify a plan than a hope. One would think it had something to do with the puritan heritage of the mostly Wasp officers who make these recommendations and decisions were it not for the unconscionable commuting distance between foundation rhetoric and foundation performance, between grant*ese* and grant*ing*.

An example which borders on caricature may be found in the 1969 report of the Irvine Foundation which summarized the role of foundations as follows:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> They are able to question the status quo, encourage experimentation and provide "seed money" for new institutions and new ideas. Foundations do the essential job which the government by nature cannot do. The Foundation is more than a mechanical alternative for government action. . . . The Foundation is an instrument for our citizens to transfer profit from the commercial sector and put it directly to work as risk capital for the general betterment of society.

Visions of a poet-port which will helicopter poets from coliseum to coliseum where they will give readings to hundreds of thousands of ticket-subsidized citizens; or a black Summerhill; or a contemporary constitutional convention with delegates elected from every state; or a little mag tucked into every fourth copy of *Time* as a pioneer experiment in piggyback distribution; or . . . To take a representative sample of the grants that Irvine actually gave that year: $25,000 to the Orange County Children's Hospital to furnish the third floor; $10,000 to the Orange County Society for Crippled Children and Adults; $5,000 to the Orange County Symphony Association; $5,000 to the Boys Club of South San Francisco to help build a gym.

And yet, having carefully surveyed the performance of thirty-three foundations with assets of $100 million or more (which collectively account for over half of the $20 billion-plus controlled by the more than 25,000 foundations in the country), and having found that the vast majority of them have been either noncreative, nonproductive, sloppy, unimaginative, unethical, arbitrary and/or misleading in their granting or reporting and self-publicizing activities, he concludes, in a euphemism worthy of one of those PR firms which more and more foundations retain to write their annual reports, that "it is obvious that private philanthropy has enormous unrealized potential." And he argues that "this potential is so great and of such special value at this point in American history that it would be reckless imprudence to throw it away. The wisest course of public policy would appear to be to give them a further chance —— for a reasonable but limited period of time —— to begin to fulfill their possibilities."

Given Nielsen's negative findings, how to account for his optimistic prognosis? The answer lies partly, one suspects, in the fact that having worked for a foundation (Ford, which gets deservedly high marks here) and having conducted his study under the aegis of a foundation (the Twentieth Century Fund, not one of the top thirty-three), he perhaps inevitably, despite honorable intentions and correct behavior on both sides, internalized something of the foundation ethic. As a result, many

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of his criticisms are ones on which all enlightened foundationmen could probably agree, and for which ready assurances and/or remedies are available.

Foundations, he tells us, have an "enclave mentality" and suffer from an "obsession for privacy" as to their purposes, grants, investments, corporate alliances, and financial interlinkages. Not to worry because government action —— hesitant in the forties, bolder in the fifties, effective in the late sixties —— has made for more stringent reporting requirements.

But "frequently the presidential front end of these foundation reports does not appear to know where the reportorial back end is going." Not important, really, because "we shouldn't overestimate" the "potential value" of these reports anyway.

"The boards of the big American foundations," we learn, "are currently overridden with conflicts of interest incompatible with the objective and exclusive devotion to philanthropic purposes and the public interest." Not critical because "apart from occasional lapses . . . the big foundations do not appear to have been guilty of the kinds of self-dealing and self-aggrandizement that have come to light in the case of some medium-sized and smaller foundations." Oh, it's true that the Alfred I. du Pont Estate and the Nemours Foundation constitutes "a scandalous example of the exploitation of a philanthropic facade to give unfair competitive advantage to associated banks and other profit-making corporations," but du Pont is the exception. Besides, foundations like Danforth and Kellogg, which have vast business ties too close for unconflicted comfort, "both . . . demonstrate that such linkage is not necessarily incompatible with effective —— even superb —— philosophic performance. . . ." The trend is with the Ford Foundation, which has diversified. Twenty years ago its holdings were entirely in the form of Ford Motor Company shares (it owned 88% of those outstanding). In the years since, Ford has disposed of 65% of its shares. Add to that the 1969 tax act which imposes high penalties for self-dealing, and it becomes apparent that concern about conflict of interest shouldn't be exaggerated.

Foundations tend to sit on their assets, and society loses tax revenues without gaining the bargained-for benefits. True in times past, but recent legislation requires that the equivalent of 6% of a foundation's assets be given out annually; too soon to know the results but they look hopeful.

Foundation boards are unrepresentative —— young people, females, nonwhites, Catholics, Jews, Mediterraneans, ethnics, intellectuals, artists, writers, social reformers are rarities. A serious criticism, related to a larger

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

problem: Mr. Nielsen, like most foundationmen, thinks that on balance donor families have an unhealthy impact on the foundations they made possible. They tend to treat the capital as private property and spend it on charitable whim instead of following the guidelines of, say, Carnegie's Alan Pizer who says, quite sensibly, that "foundations should anticipate the strains of social change and facilitate the adaptation of major institutions to such change."

Here too, however, Nielsen finds grounds for optimism. Old donors (and their families), while they seem to have life expectancies which would put most insurance companies out of business, eventually do fade away and "in a number of instances it appears that the passing of the donor has most clearly set the processes of institutional development in motion. . . . Once the evolution begins, the process is sustained by internal forces which are generated. As the donor's influence lessens, a foundation develops its own kind of institutional pride combined with a somewhat greater share of accountability. . . ." Democratize the overseers and foundation staff men will be free to march with history.

Not enough worry about the dangers of bureaucratization for my taste, not enough appreciation for the good old days when Andrew Carnegie could single-handedly decide to devote some $43 million to the improvement of libraries. But Nielsen doesn't delude himself with wishful history. Take the area of race relations where he remarks, apropos the Carnegie Corporation's failure to follow through on Gunnar Myrdal's pioneering study, *The American Dilemma*, "There have been many examples of a foundation turning its back on its failure; the Carnegie Corporation in the Myrdal study turned its back on a triumph." The race crisis seems to have been too much for the big foundations. "Even the most concerned and adaptable of the big foundations," he concedes, "have lagged behind the pace of events in the racial crisis by five to ten years. Black leadership itself and government action have been well in advance of the big foundations, as have been a number of the smaller foundations, such as New World, Taconic, Field and the Stern Family Fund."

Logically one might even find a few million dollars' worth of hope in this desolate record if, based on that experience, the big foundations would give birth to satellite smaller foundations, free of bureaucratic constraints and with specialties in areas like race. Their poor performance on such urgencies notwithstanding, Nielsen sums up: "The big foundations, for all their weaknesses, are nonetheless institutions in forward movement but the pace is stately and dangerously slow."

A comforting conclusion but one which is built, it seems to me, on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a number of essentially unexamined assumptions, among them that if foundations spend their money wisely that is sufficient justification for their tax exemption. But as Rep. John W. Byrnes of Wisconsin put it to John D. Rockefeller III, in the course of congressional hearings a few years ago:

> The real problem here . . . is that certain people have a choice as to how the tax aspect of their income is going to be spent. . . . The great vast array of the American people do not have this choice. They are not only paying for things about which some of them are not very enthusiastic, but they must also pay a higher price to carry on these services simply because people with wealth have said that they do not want to support any of these services.
>
> Should we permit a segment of our society to set up a government of its own to render philanthropic services? Our tax laws have given one group a chance to . . . make their own determination as to what is in the public good, and to decide how to spend that money.
>
> How do we cope with the choice that we have given to some people when we haven't given that choice to the great mass of citizens?

Mr. Nielsen recognizes the issue —— indeed he quotes Rep. Byrnes's exchange with Mr. Rockefeller —— but he doesn't really address it. The thrust of his inquiry has to do with how well foundations have performed and what are their prospects for improved performance, rather than whether they should be given the right to do so. It seems to me more has to be said on why the poor should sacrifice tax-financed services so that the rich might indulge their charities or foundationmen their social theories.

Conceivably Mr. Nielsen could make a case for what he calls "the third sector" (sandwiched between government and private enterprise) if he demonstrated that certain types of desirable activity will never be done by private enterprise and can or should never be done by government. He suggests this when he asks: "Who else in the 1920s and 1930s would have provided funds to give advanced training to a generation of black leaders? Who else would have helped initiate the early work on population control and family planning in the face of great public indifference and institutionalized hostility? Who else would have financed the Myrdal study on the American racial dilemma in the 1940s? And in recent years, what other funding could have been found to help organize the Mexican-American community to assert its rightful claims? Who else could have created a commission on public broadcasting, financed the Conant study of the American high school, and created the Kerr com-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mission on higher education? Who else would have put up the money for 'Sesame Street?' "

But are these legitimate rhetoricals? IBM, which has helped rebuild Bedford-Stuyvesant as part of its public affairs program, might have spawned a "Sesame Street." A War on Poverty unbeset by a War on Vietnam might have provided funds to give training to future generations of black leaders. In a foundationless world any number of community groups might have helped initiate early work on population control and family planning, and so forth. Nielsen himself points out (apropos a discussion of the comparative quality of government and foundation personnel) that even in the social sciences, government-supported offices of naval research and institutes such as Rand "have achievements to their credit which few private institutions can match."

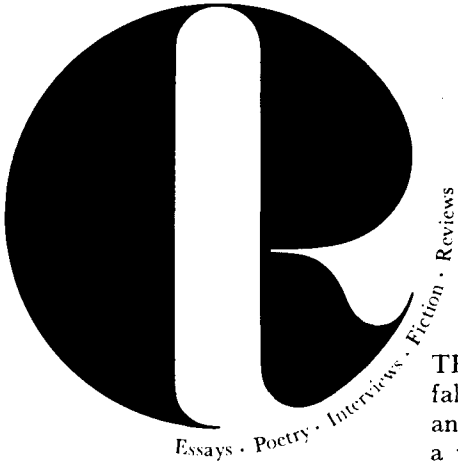
Even if Mr. Nielsen is right and only "the third sector" will undertake certain programs is that a priori an argument for or against those programs? After all, if neither private enterprise nor public opinion wants them, why should taxpayers subsidize them? To persuade us of his case Mr. Nielsen must tell us more than that his sympathies lie with the "modernists" who reject the traditional notion that foundations should stick to the private sector (hospitals, boys clubs, etc.) and believe that they should be "at the center of things, not the edges, and that they must more than merely co-exist with government —— they must communicate and collaborate with it."

And would it be possible for Mr. Nielsen to articulate a set of values —— his implicit criteria —— on which most reasonable men, foundationmen and nonfoundationmen alike, would agree? I'm skeptical. He approves of the defense fund that Ford helped set up for Mexican-Americans because, having defined a social objective, Ford was able "to alter in a subtle way the balance of political forces in those areas where Mexican-Americans are concentrated." Okay. Nielsen and I and many Mexican-Americans are all for that particular defense fund, but many other Mexican-Americans (the sort foundationmen tend to dismiss as one component in the "extremists of both sides") are violently opposed to it.

Or consider the analysis of a New Left critic like David Horowitz (which Mr. Nielsen doesn't, perhaps because it appeared in the presumptively "extremist" *Ramparts*), who points out that all of the top university Institutes of International Studies (including Columbia, Chicago, Harvard, Berkeley, MIT, Cornell, etc.) are funded principally by one foundation (the Ford Foundation); that none of these institutes would exist without foundation funding; and that these institutes are critically

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE OHIO REVIEW



Some Recent Contributors
Adrienne Rich
M. H. Abrams
Olivia Solomon
Edward Stone
Richard Hugo
Robert Bly
Jean Valentine
Charles Bukowski
Jack Matthews
Joyce Carol Oates
William Stafford
Dabney Stuart
Norman Rabkin
Herbert Gold
O. B. Hardison, Jr.
Mona Van Duyn
Theodore Weiss

THE OHIO REVIEW (published fall, winter, spring) is a significant and interesting journal, providing a wide presentation of the thought and writing of our time. Each issue seeks variety, quality, range, energy.

A special continuing feature of THE OHIO REVIEW is its series of interviews with contemporary poets. Previous issues include interviews with Adrienne Rich, Mark Strand, William Matthews, Galway Kinnell, Charles Simic, and Louis Simpson (all still available). Future issues will present interviews with John Berryman, James Tate, Louise Glück, Joyce Carol Oates, and Marvin Bell.

Address subscriptions to THE OHIO REVIEW, 346 Ellis Hall, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio 45701. One year $5; three years $12. (Foreign subscribers add $1 per year.) New subscriptions will begin with the current issue unless otherwise requested.
(Single copy price: $2.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interlocked with the nation's foreign policy-making mechanism. Do we really want Ford having that much to say about our foreign policy? Do we want any foundation or group of foundations having that much potential power? And isn't that power the raison d'etre of the third sector?

Finally, one suspects there is a Hobbesian assumption which underlies *The Big Foundations* —— namely the unspoken idea that men are so mean, nasty, and brutish that if we took away all of the tax benefits, nobody would give any money to charity. But maybe a young Ford (especially one whose ancestors' wealth had not been drained off by foundations) would decide that what his children —— all children —— needed was a "Sesame Street"; maybe a Stewart Mott —— *regardless of the lack of tax benefits* —— would finance a legal defense fund for Mexicans or Indians or gays. In fact, maybe the most enlightened and committed would stay in the philanthropy business and only the tax dodgers, the "traditionalists," the unimaginative, would head for the exit. Moreover, even if the best of the foundationmen ended up in sectors one and two, they might well be a force for more corporate and government social reponsibility and imagination, thus obviating the need for an additional sector.

Despite all of these questions and reservations, it is perhaps an argument in Nielsen's favor that nobody *did* commission his worthwhile study until the Twentieth Century Fund came along. And although he expresses confidence in the consumer movement as one way of keeping foundations honest (how about a Foundation-Ombudsman, a watchdog foundation on foundations?) he is too modest to note that books like this are another way. One hopes he will do the sequel, that it will further explore some of the questions raised, and one concedes it a second point in his and the Twentieth Century Fund's favor that it will probably take another Twentieth Century Fund grant to make it possible.

Victor S. Navasky

WANTED

Presidential posters, buttons, cartoons, memorabilia.

Write PR Box 1C
Partisan Review
1 Richardson St.
New Brunswick, N.J. 08903

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OVER THE EDGE

THEY FEED THEY LION. By Philip Levine. Atheneum. $3.95 paper.

AN EAR IN BARTRAM'S TREE. By Jonathan Williams. New Directions. $1.95 paper.

RIVERBED. By David Wagoner. Indiana U. Press. $4.95.

Philip Levine's first book of poems (*On The Edge*, 1963) was remarkably good. It demonstrated an already accomplished poet whose strong voice moved through the mostly traditional verse with intelligence, confidence, and an uncanny power to unsettle. Its theme was "the loss of human power" and "the gradual decay of dignity"; its mood was one of almost unremitting pessimism:

If it were mine by one word
I would not save any man,
myself or the universe
at such cost: reality.
. . . . . .
there is no armor or stance,
only the frail dignity
of surrender, which is all
that can separate me now
or then from the dumb beast's fall,
unseen in the frozen snow.
("Night Thoughts over a Sick Child")

Since that first book Levine's pursuit of his central theme has worked a big transformation in his style:

DOWN THE MOUNTAIN
in Fresno, L.A., Oakland
a man with three names and no features
closes my file.
The winds
are weighed, the distance clocked.
Everything is entered in the book.
(from They Feed They Lion)

The skill here is, if anything, more obvious: what's especially new is the immediacy of effect, the almost telegraphic communication of the voice. In its blunt, precise movement it mimics the rhythms of the technology which promotes the poem's insane assumption: the notion that once you've recorded data, you've described a life. The last line triggers the characteristic Levine effect of horror, suggesting by its irrevocable movement the blind tenacity with which the insane belief is held.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This small, perfect poem helps reveal the full meaning of Levine's first title. *On the Edge* took us to "the edge of laughter," which is to say the edge of the manageable, the supportable, the tolerable, the barely reasonable. *They Feed They Lion* takes us over the edge into a nightmare world of the wholly mad; a world of

> *charred faces, the eyes*
> *boarded up, the rubble of innards, the cry*
> *of wet smoke hanging in your throat,*
> *the twisted river stopped at the color of iron.*
> *We burn this city every day.*

The city is Detroit, the locale of half the poems in the book and the symbol of a technology gone berserk, infecting the lives of its workers like a cancer; a city of ammunition dumps, automobile graveyards, "empires/ of metal shops, brickflats, storage tanks,/ robbing the air." it's also a city of lonely men and women reduced to parts of themselves, people whose minimal lives are so abraded by despair that it "Don't matter what rare breath/ puddles in fire on/ the foundry floor. The toilets/ overflow, the rats dance, the maggots/ have it, the worms of money/ crack like whips, and/ among the angels/ we lie down."

Reversing the dehumanizing tendency whereby we treat people as if they were their "statistics," Levine nominates the oppressed of this refuse world as "angels"; and most of the best poems in this book are ones in which he speaks in the depressed voices of those too bewildered and dispirited to speak for themselves:

> *At the end of mud road*
> *in the false dawn of the slag heap*
> *the hut of the angel Bernard.*
> *His brothers are factories and*
> *bowling teams, his mother is the*
> *power to blight, his father*
> *moves in all men like a threat,*
> *a closing of hands, an unkept*
> *promise to return.*
> *("Angels of Detroit")*

As this section concludes, Bernard "cries to sleep." In another section from the same poem "Nigger/ boy's crying in/ the shit house." In "Saturday Sweeping," "Half/ the men in this town/ are crying in/ the snow." "How much can it hurt?" asks one poem. For the people of Levine's world, the answer is "More than we ever expected; more than we thought we could bear."

And their repeated cries would be unbearable, except that some are of anger as well as sorrow, refusal as well as surrender. The title poem, the best in the book and one of the most powerful poems I've read in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

years, is a poem of anger in which Levine's vision carries us to the edge of apocalypse, a poem so urgent and propulsive in voice as to ignore the "edges" of syntax, logical relation, propositional sense:

From my five arms and all my hands,
From all my white sins forgiven, they feed,
From my car passing under the stars,
They Lion, from my children inherit,
From the oak turned to a wall, they Lion,
From they sack and they belly opened
And all that was hidden burning on the oil-stained earth
They feed they Lion and he comes.

The surging repetition of "They Lion" is like a cry trying to find shape in language. The passage doesn't make "sense," of course, since that's one of the points of the poem. It's the kind of poem Barthes would applaud — so wholly engaged that it verges on the act of abolishing itself.

Levine risks a lot with his new poetry; and when his vision is wholly private, then lines, images, sometimes entire poems fail to communicate; sometimes a flat and predictable language seeks automatic response. But when he focuses on the private pains and social ills of others, his best poems oblige us to cry with him. *They Feed They Lion* is not a comforting experience. More important, in its compassion, its skill, and its rare power to disturb our dulled attentions, it is a necessary and a valuable one.

An Ear In Bartram's Tree is Jonathan Williams's selection from ten years' work (1957–67), thus giving us a clear sense of the variety and quality of his poetry. Williams is definitely in the American grain, a Black Mountain product, an imagistic mystic, a disciple of W. C. Williams ("my spiritual grandfather"), a hip Pound who stayed home, a poet/teacher/botanist/lecturer/editor who claims in his "Credo" to "dig/ Everything Swinging," an indefatigable promoter of others' work, a writer who invites lists because in his typically American way he so loves them:

house-leek & garlic,
hyssop & mouse;

hawk & hepatica,
hyacinth, finch!

crawl, all
exits

from
hibernaculum*!*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The assumption of this passage is that of Williams's mentor: no ideas but in things —— including word-things like *hibernaculum*; and the generous impulse of his poetry is to describe as many "things" as possible. It's probably inevitable, therefore, that in so doing he will sometimes perform in an ungainly manner and prove, in fact, to be less than wholly successful. And it's easy, since we're listing, to imagine a list of complaints against his poetry.

It's sometimes corny (one poem is titled "Smile a little, things could be a lot worse"). It's chummy (Williams, Pound, Buckminster Fuller are "Bill," "Ez," "Bucky"). It's irrepressibly cheerful (even the epitaphs are happy). It's self-regarding and self-promoting (in praise of himself, Williams quotes W. C. Williams, Duncan, Zukovsky, Dahlberg —— even Jonathan Williams). It's confessedly, unabashedly non-"professional": some of it is "found," some of it is heard conversation worked into verse form, some of it is spontaneous utterance (the *Mahler* sequence was composed during the actual duration of the music —— "lest the composing get too elaborated"). It's also, as I've suggested, not *original* insofar as Williams is happy to incorporate into and out of the body of his poems whatever is at hand and of use, whether it be a line from Heraclitus, the fourteen-year-old Samuel Palmer's watercolor notations for the sketch "A Lane at Thanet," Archie Moore quoting Cervantes, or a filling station sign on a Carolina highway.

I could go on, but the list wouldn't much help, since it doesn't much communicate the general effect of Williams's poetry —— which is rather like that of a one-man, three-ring, outdoor, Barnum and Bailey circus. Williams's poems are collages, poems-as-happenings, poems-as-eclectic, occasional lyric. Here, from *Mahler*, is the third movement of Symphony No. 4:

III. RESTFUL

"I live in a hole here,
but God has a beautiful mansion for me elsewhere."

O grow
a Mountain in Fountain
Court

Sundown over
London

Kate Blake
in black

Although this poem can yield to stylistic analysis, it strenuously resists the idea of poetry as a formal activity, self-contained and self-sufficient.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Williams even resists distinctions between poetry and prose, admitting "in the midst of writing this poem, which is to be very pedantic and mildly arcane and written very quickly to get rid of worrying just for once whether it is prose or its blessed contrary" to a "blessed" ignorance of the differences.

In other words, the quality of Williams's accomplishment is uneven but often high; its variety is absolutely extraordinary. *An Ear In Bartram's Tree* will inspire in some the discomfort felt by a Flaubert scholar at a reading of Mark Twain. But in its exuberance and generosity of spirit, it is "a procession no one can follow after / But be like a little dog following a brass band."

For years David Wagoner has been writing not only a large body of poetry but a large number of first-rate poems as well; and although *Riverbed*, his latest book, doesn't significantly improve on his best work, it unquestionably increases it. This is the shortest poem from that book:

Doing Time

Do your own time, *say prisoners*
To those who spill their lives to others.
I serve my indeterminate years
Through these concurrent sentences
Out of a hope to get time off
For good behavior, doing life
For willful failure to report
On what goes on and on in the heart.

In its economy and sureness of movement, "Doing Time" is typical of Wagoner at his best. It's also typical by virtue of the way the wit, unfolding as the central metaphor expands, strengthens the argument. Wagoner is one of the wittiest and most toughly reasonable poets writing today; the symbiotic relation between wit and seriousness in his poetry is inevitable in a writer who places a high value on "balance" and who, in his neoclassical way, is bent on reminding himself as well as his reader that man is "No straddler of winged horses, no budding centaur."

"Doing Time" is typical in subject too since it describes a speaker trapped by time, the circumstance which in Wagoner's view most hedges and prohibits our freedoms since it refuses to replace the illusions it robs. In "Old Man, Old Man," an aged speaker, nearly out of time and illusion, tells his young questioners: "I have become the best and worst I dreamed." It's clear he has realized the worst last. And so time traps; but it receives "willful" cooperation from our reduced selves, moving as we do in "a dark of our own making." There are no clear directions for the befogged self. No matter where we are, that "is the place where we must be ready to take / The truths or consequences / Of which there are none to be filched or mastered or depended on." By the time we reach the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

necessary signpost, "the words will be gone, and the rusty earth and air / Will have eaten the pole and nails." ("The Middle of Nowhere")

Though this sounds like latter-day *Four Quartets*, the sensibility recorded in that image of a devouring nature is much closer to Frost's. The image suggests some of the difficulities of survival in Wagoner's world, as do titles like *Staying Alive, A Place to Stand, Working Against Time* (the title he chose for the English edition of his selected poetry). Life's odds are uneven, and its movement is less a matter of progress than "persistence"; we're like the secondhand giveaway shoes "at St. Vincent DePaul's" —— "free as long as they last." Yet survival doesn't necessarily guarantee freedom, only more survival. Life is a "set of stages," each faltering and instinct with the possibility of death or deeper darkness. But though hope is thus "unreasonable," the same is ultimately true of reason itself; and "unreasonable hope" is finally justified by the occasional but actual miracle of human freedom:

The Makers of Rain

We sit at the top of the Pyramid of the Magician
Our last day in Uxmal, afraid
Of the sheer steps and the ranks of the rain gods,
The rows of Chacmuls in stone with their high-flung,
fanfaring noses.
Having guided ourselves this far, we look
At the ruined ball-court and, beyond, the iguanas basking
In the cracked fretwork of the Palace of the Governor,
The stone jaguars mating in the plaza
By the broken phallus, and with its jammed perspective,
the quadrangle
Where four classes of priests took charge of the rain.

Not even the Governors were allowed this high to lord it
Over the land from the mouth of the temple
Whose intricate facade is a Chacmul's face
Behind our backs. Not daring to ask for a change in the deep sky,

We wait for our lives to topple
Like the rest, though our hands hold us together, balancing
Our love against the weight of evidence
That has caved in one whole side of this pyramid.

We are masters of nothing we survey,
But what the Magician did from here —— chant with his arms
outstretched
Over a dying city or reach halfway to the clouds sailing aloof

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Over the maize fields — is ours to try, since we believe in magic,
Believe we can climb to it slowly, being frightened,
That it can break suddenly out of stone or out of the dry air.
As priest and priestess of ourselves, before praying for rain,
We weep to show it how.

Like so many of Wagoner's poems, "The Makers of Rain" is "a momentary stay against confusion." Precariously perched midway between heaven and earth with an inevitable descent lurking past the poem's ending, the two companions offer a gesture of acquiescence and propitiation to a chastening nature: it is their acceptance of powerlessness which renders them for the moment powerful, free. Here you have an essential Wagoner poem, as well as a proof that Wagoner is himself a magician, a "maker of rain," a poet of renewal. To say that his large ambitions sometimes fail is merely to say what everyone knows: good poets don't always write good poems. To say that they often succeed is to say that in his wit and intelligence, his sympathy and craft, he is one of the best poets of his generation.

(If you're new to his poetry, I suggest you pick up the *New and Selected Poems*, chosen by himself.)

Alan Helms

SUBSCRIBE TO
FICTION

FICTION
Box 112
Stuyvesant Station
New York, N.Y. 10009

Please send me FICTION for

☐ 1 year at $2.25

☐ 2 years at $4.00

I enclose a check or money order.

Name .....

Address .....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

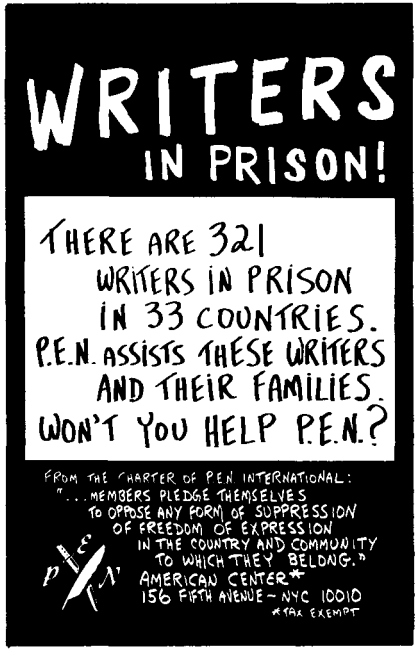
BEWLEY FUND

PR:

A committee has been formed to honor the memory of Marius Bewley in some way appropriate to his spirit and interests. We would like to establish a fund of some $20,000 in his name and use the income for two occasions each year: a reading of poetry one semester and a public lecture the other, on the Rutgers campus at New Brunswick where Marius was a beloved and distinguished teacher.

Contributions should be made payable to the Marius Bewley Fund and sent to: Professor Richard Poirier, Department of English, 330 Scott Hall, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903

Marius Bewley Fund Committee
Richard Poirier, Chairman;
Barbara Epstein, Paul Fussell,
David Kalstone, C. F. Main,
James Merrill, Karl Miller,
Frederick Morgan



MIGHT MADE RIGHT

PR:

I owe an apology to Bernard Malamud for turning inside out a point he made in his N.B.A. acceptance speech in 1967. In "Reading Myself," (*PR* 3/1973) I explained a shift in my own literary interests in this way: "Gradually the *least* promising material began to seem to me the most attractive, material unlike, say, what Malamud may have had in mind when, upon accepting the National Book Award for *The Fixer*, he quoted from Melville to the effect that a 'a great book demands a great subject.' " I have now come upon Malamud's essay, "Theme, Content and the 'New Novel,' " adapted from that speech and published in the anthology *Page 2*, edited by Frances Brown. It turns out that I had not remembered the Melville quotation he read to the audience in Philharmonic Hall that evening in March of 1967 any better than I remembered what he had then said about it. "To produce a mighty book," Melville wrote, "you must choose a mighty theme" —— a statement which led Malamud to comment, ". . .it's obvious that a mighty theme doesn't necessarily guarantee a mighty book . . . some who have made a study of 'great themes' —— indeed, keep lists of them in their billfolds —— when they try to make use of one, beat a hollow drum. They may want to work with a significant theme, but it doesn't excite their experience, or speak to their talent."

If I had sought out the source and context of the Melville quotation before conveniently garbling it to help make a point, I would have discovered that what Malamud had actually said was something with which of course I wholeheartedly agreed.

Philip Roth

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CRIES AND CRITICS

PR:

I find myself in strong disagreement with the review of *Cries and Whispers*, primarily because the style of the film, however *personally* irritating to the reviewer, is essential to its thematic integrity and force. For example, Mr. Baumbach complains the film is "enervated" and "visually static." Clearly disease, whether moral, physical, or psychological, erodes one's vitality, robs one of full capacity for life, of original response. Furthermore, since one of the themes of the movie is human insufficiency in the face of death, the various characters depend on conventions of language and movement to see them through the ordeal. The sisters' self-conscious poses, always aesthetically striking, are never informed by love.

Mr. Baumbach objects that everything in the film is "self-referring." Bergman has quite deliberately created a self-contained world whose symbols of language, gesture, and emotion are expanded and enriched by variations on those symbols and which absolutely resists incursions by extraneous material. The effect is oppressive —— one is not allowed to escape to a different world or time, which might provide a tempering perspective —— but has the advantage of a rich concentration in which the real mystery at the center —— the source and existence of the capacity for grace and affirmation —— remains intact.

The function of the flashbacks is not to reveal a logical or progressive past (which would cancel, to some extent, the mystery of the present as well as deny the fragmented and inorganic nature of Karin and Maria's lives), but rather to reveal different capacities for emotional response and disparate structurings of reality. And although there is probably never a "justifying context" for the sexual self-mutilation Karin performs in her memory/fantasy, we *are* given a convincing catalyst in her lecherous, morally putrified husband. Mr. Baumbach's curious (all the more curious because he claims to have suffered so, watching the movie) adjective "vulgar" ignores the act's harrowing effect as well as its central significance: the orgasmic embrace of death.

Finally, the ending is *not*, nor is meant to be, a resolution of the problems the film has posed. In the last scene, the sisters share a few minutes of blessedness and beauty, as ephemeral as the white dresses they wear or the pleasant autumn weather. And it is only Agnes's naiveté and generosity that make them possible, that are brighter, for a visionary moment, than the terrible gleam of irony. The "decisive" event Maria had imagined for all of them depends upon a love only Agnes, ultimately, can feel and sustain. **Jonna G. Semeiks, New York**

Mr. Baumbach replies:

Jonna Semeiks and I disagree about *Cries and Whispers*, although not so blatantly as her letter seems to think. Either I failed to make myself clear or Ms. Semeiks, in defense of what apparently was an important experience to her, insists on misunderstanding me. I don't find the film's style "*personally* irritating" (as opposed to impersonally?) and I have the sense that Ms.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Semeiks is talking about something other than style here. What I do find irritating is the open-mouthed thrall in which Bergman seems to hold his admirers, particularly on what seems to me his thinnest occasions. My piece was written in part at least as a reaction to the excessive and rather automatic praise of those reviewers who tend to recognize film art only when it presents itself in capital letters. I agree that *Cries and Whispers* is a powerful work —— it couldn't be otherwise given the nature of its subject —— but it is also formulated and hollow. Ms. Semeiks's assumption that a work can't be both harrowing and vulgar (and significant) makes no sense. A much lesser film than *Cries and Whispers, The Exorcist*, on another level, is all these things.

I have no particular disagreement with her readings of particular scenes, and I think her analysis of the film's overall theme is just, although I think she makes a tactical error in trying to justify the film's enervated quality by arguing that Bergman intends his characters as deenergized. That's like justifying being dull about dullness. In my essay I was talking about the movement of the film being enervated, which has little to do with the "self-conscious poses" of the characters.

Any half-serious work, particularly if it is abstract and symbolic, is susceptible to intellectual justifications that demonstrate its integrity. It is a common error to suppose —— our schools I suspect are to blame —— that what a work translates into is what it is. Jonna Semeiks reads the Bergman film as a literary text —— there is never any indication in her letter that the writer is talking about a motion picture —— and her analysis, which is sometimes quite eloquent, takes *Cries and Whispers* at its most inflated evaluation of itself. My objection to *Cries and Whispers*, my irritation with it if you will, has to do with the disparity between the claims of profundity the film makes for itself (and beguiles others to make for it) and the morbidly sensational and platitudinous experience it actually offers.

CORRECTION

The Paul Klee drawings in PR 3/1973 were reproduced by permission COSMOPRESS and SPADEM 1973 by F.R.R. Inc.

Part rhapsody, part nightmare

THE OLD ONE

by

David Middlebrook

"THE OLD ONE is by one of the most imaginative young writers at work today." — **JOHN HAWKES**

Order direct
$5.95 Hardcover
$2.95 Paperback
plus 25¢ postage

orion press
P.O. Box 2244
Eugene, Oregon 97402

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DON JUAN ON HIGH

PR:

Vincent Crapanzano's review of the works of Carlos Castaneda failed, in this reader's opinion, to address itself to all but the most superficial aspects of Castaneda's relationship with the sorcerer, Juan Matus. What Castaneda is about was rendered still more obscure by the omnibus discussion in the same review of Turnbull's works on the Pygmies and the Ik of Africa —— "journeys without" —— alongside Castaneda's "journey within." These anthropological encounters are as unlike one another as a detailed case history by an outside observer versus a personal diary of psychoanalytic immersion, a grappling with sometimes terrifying, sometimes ecstatic perceptions in the context of an ambiguous transference.

From a purely formal point of view Crapanzano's criticism of Castaneda's exploitation of the relationship through repetitive reportage extending soon into a fourth volume is well taken. That Castaneda to this day has not completed the public processing of personal events experienced in the world of don Juan is, however, hardly surprising.

Of the sorcerer the reviewer complains, "We know don Juan only as Castaneda does —— not in fact, of course, but in the retrospective consciousness of a storyteller." This assertion follows an extensive discussion of the trickster-transformer qualities of don Juan (as well as his colleague, don Genaro) and the element of joke in Castaneda's predicament —— meaning, presumably, the latter's dependence on don Juan. But even without first-person revelations by don Juan we do know that he refused to accept monetary payment for his tutelage of Castaneda, and that Castaneda's first experience with Mescalito (peyote) was interpreted by the sorcerer as a positive sign that Castaneda should be introduced, as don Juan's "divine" successor, into general mysteries known only to sorcerers and specific powers in his personal command. In short, we know that don Juan, an old man, looked upon Castaneda as his spiritual son and that he expended enormous effort to transmit his knowledge.

That don Juan even attempted to help Castaneda "work through" —— in psychoanalytic parlance —— Castaneda's resistance to his own father as an obstacle to his receptivity to the sorcerer's teachings is brilliantly exemplified in a chapter

GEORGE STREET PLAYHOUSE

PROFESSIONAL THEATER
IN CENTRAL NEW JERSEY

414 GEORGE STREET
NEW BRUNSWICK
NEW JERSEY 08901
(201) 246-7717

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

entitled "Assuming Responsibility" in *Journey to Ixtlan*. After a heated discussion in which don Juan attempts to show Castaneda that once he (in childhood) had signified agreement with his father's plan to go swimming with him, it was his responsibility to fulfill his side of the bargain even if his father did not, Castaneda asks: "Why do you tell me all this, don Juan? Why are you doing this to me?"

The gravity of this conversation in which don Juan calls the attention of his apprentice to the responsibilities inherent in personal commitment and implicitly offers himself as a remedial parent belies the reviewer's overemphasis on the manipulative, the tempting, the clownish and illusional aspects of the relationship.

Marie Coleman Nelson, Smithtown, N.Y.

Mr. Crapanzano replies:

Ms. Nelson has been "held back by the invisible wall of metaphor." There is no difference between the "journey within" and the "journey without," at least in the don Juan–Castaneda scheme of things. The "manipulative, the tempting, the clownish and illusional" are not at loggerheads with the serious, the spiritual, the grace, and the therapeutic. To translate don Juan into a "remedial parent" and to describe his relationship to Castaneda in "psychoanalytic parlance" — I made use only of a metaphor from psychoanalysis — is to lose sight of the uniqueness of the relationship and, ultimately, of the significance of the books.

Beginning our 11th year!

PSYCHOTHERAPY:
THEORY, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The Quarterly Journal of the Psychotherapy Division of the American Psychological Association

EUGENE T. GENDLIN, Editor

PSYCHOTHERAPY is not limited to research, but also specializes in theory and in direct descriptions of cases, with emphasis on the therapist describing the problems and choices he was up against.

PSYCHOTHERAPY is open to all the very different viewpoints in the field, and therefore, presents the arguments between these views.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $10.00 PER YEAR

Single copies, $2.50; Student Rate, $5.00; Foreign Rate, $11.00

Back issues are available. Volumes 1-10 at $10.00 per volume, $2.50 single issue U.S.A. $2.75 foreign.

Please enter a one year subscription beginning with the current issue .....

Also send back issues, Vol. I .....; Vol. II .....; Vol. III .....; Vol. IV .....; Vol. V .....; Vol. VI .....; Vol. VII .....; Vol. VIII .....; Vol. IX .....; Vol. X .....

Name ..... Check enclosed .....

Address .....

City ..... State ..... Zip .....

Send to: E. T. Gendlin, Editor, Dept. of Psychology, University of Chicago, 5848 S. University, Chicago, Illinois 60637, U.S.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Myriad-minded" master.

Coleridge's famed epithet can justly be applied to I. A. Richards —critic, teacher, student of language, poet, philosopher, and mountaineer. Now a score of Richards' students, colleagues, and admirers have contributed essays and poems that reflect the many facets of Richards' life and work, as well as his lasting impact on two generations of writers and scholars. B. F. Skinner, Eric Havelock, Richard Eberhart, Muriel Bradbrook, Richmond Lattimore, Helen Vendler, John Hollander, Robert Penn Warren, and Robert Lowell are among the distinguished group of scholars, critics, and poets whose work is included in this volume, together with Reuben Brower's rare and remarkable interview with Richards and an annotated bibliography of Richards' work. The volume honors both the breadth and depth of I. A. Richards' achievement.

I.A. RICHARDS

Essays in His Honor

Edited by Reuben Brower, Helen Vendler, and John Hollander

Illustrated, $12.50

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
200 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016

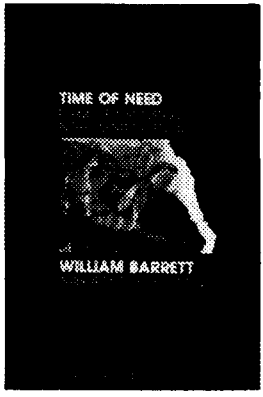
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A NEW HARPER TORCHBOOK

Time of Need

Forms of Imagination in the Twentieth Century

WILLIAM BARRETT



"Examining Camus, Hemingway, Faulkner, Kafka, Joyce, Hesse, and even E. M. Forster—as well as Giacometti, Henry Moore, Picasso, and others in the visual arts—[Barrett] shows them moving beyond rational meaning, which is not the business of art, toward myth, mysteries, and perspectives even deeper than those in de Chirico's paintings. For all the pages that have been written about them, his interpretations of these artists are startlingly fresh and provocative."—ANATOLE BROYARD, *New York Times*

"William Barrett's *Time of Need,* like his *Irrational Man* over a decade ago, is that rare thing: a useful book. . . . His careful readings are a delight."—*The New Republic*

"Time of Need is a beautifully written, carefully thought-out exploration of one of the main trends in the literature and art of our time. William Barrett has the rare talent of handling with equal sophistication and directness literary analysis and metaphysical concepts. . . . *Time of Need* is a quiet, penetrating book which brings order and light into the contemporary modes of thought, imagination, and sensibility."—GERMAINE BREE

TB/1754 $2.95

For a complete catalog, write

Harper & Row

Paperback Dept.
10 E. 53d St., New York 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED